

Gamers' Republic

COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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OUR FIRST LOOK AT
THE NEW GAME AND...
AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT
THE NEW 12" FIGURES!



LUNAR: SILVER STAR STORY

THE ROLE PLAYING EPIC
COMES TO THE PLAYSTATION

NEW DREAMCAST GAMES!
PSYCHIC FORCE 2012, AERO DANCING,
PUYO PUYN, MONACO GP 2, POWER STONE,
PLUS MORE SHENMUE!

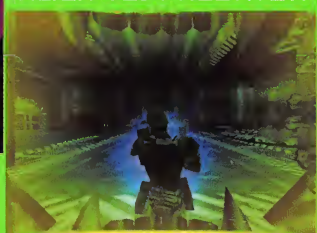
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ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
THE SCI-FI LEGEND LIVES ON!

FINAL FANTASY VIII
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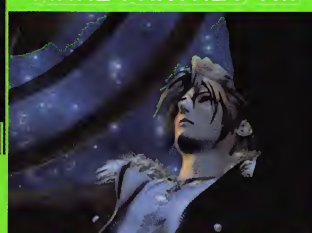
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FINAL FANTASY VIII



INTERVIEWS: UP CLOSE AND A LITTLE TOO PERSONAL WITH TOMMY TALLARICO!
IMPORTS, ANIME, NEWS, MUSIC AND MOVIES!

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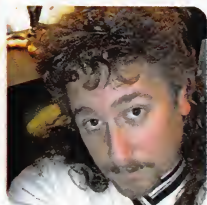


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Game Republic MANIFESTO

As issue number twelve rolls off the presses, we find the video-game industry once again in a state of flux. The big three are busy again, maneuvering their next consoles as the video-game public looks on and continues to grow and mature. Sega have opened the show once again and Sony have answered (on the first ring!), while Nintendo (who already have games in development for their next console) look on.

I view all of this as good – really good. High-powered consoles that support on-line gaming (among other things) at down-to-earth prices...well, that spells job security for us, so we're doin' a little jig.

What I find puzzling, though, is how the announcement of a system that won't arrive here until winter 2000 has people dissing a system that won't arrive here until this September, when both are to be celebrated for one obvi-

ous reason: software. Since when did a console's specs determine its future or worth?

The fact that the PS2 can push more polygons doesn't make me want to play the next *Shinobi*, *Strider*, *Phantasy Star*, *Blue Stinger* or *Treasure* game any less, it just makes me want two consoles, just like owning a Dreamcast hasn't stopped me thinking about the new *Mario RPG*, *DKC 64*, *Rayman 2*, *Jet Force Gemini*, *Messiah*, and a host of other games I'm looking forward to. All the Sega nay-sayers with their doomsday headlines make me ill. Maybe Sega won't be number one. Hey, who knows, maybe they will, but regardless, if they cater to the Sega faithful, they'll be in the mix, and that's all their fans really care about. At the end of the day it has always been and always will be about the games. Let's not lose sight of that. Now wish us a happy anniversary and read on!

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TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE →
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RIDGE RACER T4 .68

It's Ridge Racer time again! Join us as we review the fourth installment of Namco's classic racer.



ALIENS vs. PREDATOR .61

Experience the terror of this incredible video game that brings these classic sci-fi icons together in one frightening frag-fest. Prepare to shred flesh, annihilate species and hunt humans to extinction in this amazing FPS for the PC.





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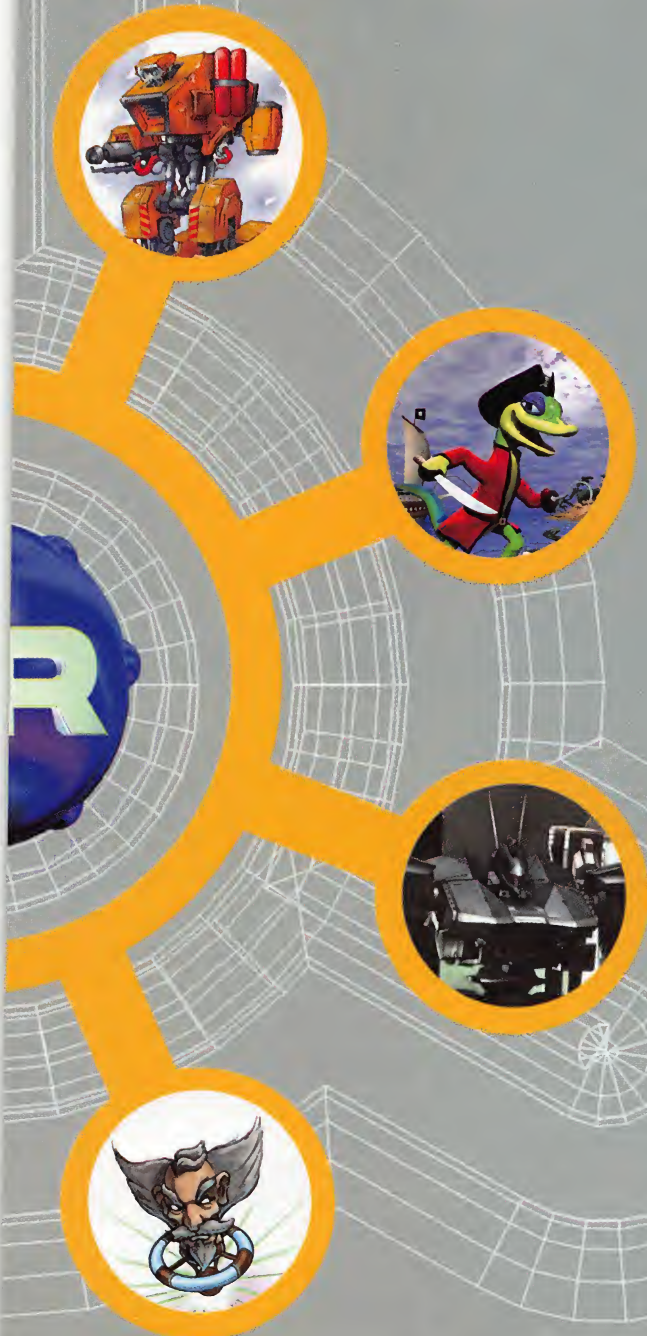
LUNAR: SSS .22

The classic role playing game returns. Whether you're a first-time visitor to the magical world of Lunar or simply returning to relive the memories, Silver Star Story Complete is a game to be appreciated by all.



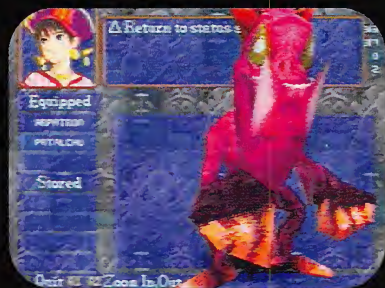
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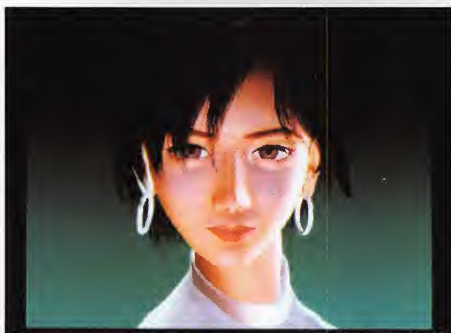
JADE ELEGAN

STORY OF THE TAMAMAYU

frontlines

SONY'S DREAM OF NEXT-GEN PSX AWAKES!

Sony Computer Entertainment revealed its next-generation PlayStation (tentatively called PSX2) at the big conference held in Tokyo...



For the PSX 2 demo, Namco endowed their RRT4 model with loads of attitude...and we're all in love!! What do you mean, she's not real!?! She winked at me!!

...March 2. PSX2, or the "Emotion Engine" (the popular developmental name right now) will adopt a DVD-ROM format and come packed with a true 128-bit Toshiba CPU, which means that the data bus, cache memory, and all resistors are purely 128-bit, thus enabling transfer of any multimedia information at high speeds. Developed by 238 dedicated engineers, this chip is comparable to the speed of super computers, at 6.2 GFLOPS/sec.

The PSX2 comes with a graphic accelerator called the "Graphic Synthesizer" that has a 2560-bit band width at 150 MHz. The Graphic Synthesizer has been designed as a single chip, and its transfer rate is 48GB/sec, which is about 20 times more powerful than that of current PC accelerators. That's very, very fast.

Because of the powerful chip, the PSX2 can display 75 million polygons/sec in raw format, and it can display approximately 20 million polygons/sec when using Z-buffering and advanced polygon and texture effects, such as rounded polygons (Nurbs).

In addition, current PS games will be 100 percent compatible with the new hardware, thanks to an I/O architecture that includes an approximation of the PS' original 33 MHz chip. Also, since the machine can integrate any digital device currently available, it looks like the PSX2 won't be limited to being a game machine. It might even support popular formats like USB and IEEE 1394. In effect, it might be possible to connect devices such as PCs, digital cameras, and any number of printing applications to the system via ports.

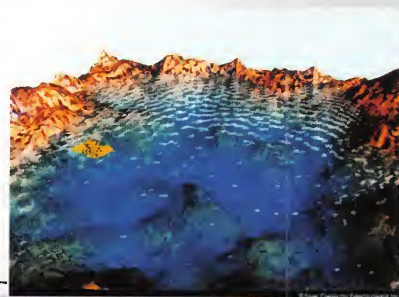
Sony is planning to release the PSX2 sometime in the winter in Japan. Many believe it will be March 2000, at the tail end of the '99 fiscal year, but rumors hint at a December release (in order to capitalize on the holiday season). They will move onto the US and European launch in the fall of 2001. So far, solid titles that will be released at the time of the PSX2's release are unknown, although all-powerful current PS developers are sure to be onboard.

SCEI, From Software, Namco, and Square were showing off demo technical movies based on current popular PS game titles at the conference.

The footage was truly beautiful. SCEI's technical demonstrations consisted of dynamic 3D presentations. Their main goal was to demonstrate a new generation of 3D technology, a synergistic approach to "natural" polygonal display and lively, emotional 3D reactions and effects. Incredible flora with thousands

To see all of these individual elements floating around in space is enough to make us lose our minds!

of individual follicles were blown this way and that by invisible winds. A water basin (complete with rubber ducky) was being manipulated, emptied and filled, rippling with mind-numbing realism to its very depths. Offering impressive demos of their own, Namco and Square provided incredibly detailed real-time 3D imagery based on their popular PS franchises – images which were previously only attained through rendering programs designed to be implemented in Full Motion Video intros and cut-scenes.

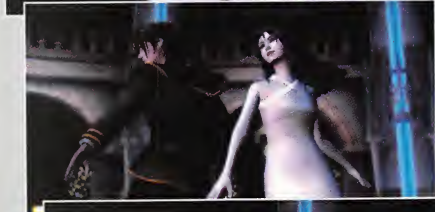


Water effects, anyone? Unbelievable!



Gran Turismo, circa 2001: it'll be cheaper than buying a new car, and look just like the real thing. Just remember: crashing in video games doesn't affect your insurance. At least, not yet.

detailed *Tobal*-style fighters pummeling one another across (and through!) beautifully layered 3D environments. From Software's demo, in-tune with the fantasy theme of their *King's Field* series, was an atmospheric graveyard scene showing loads of polygonal skeletons rising from the earth. It ended as all the skeletons flew apart, and each bony anatomical fragment merged to form a huge demonic skeletal creature. Exciting to say the least!



Square takes us to the dance, showing off FMV-quality real-time moves and camera pans.

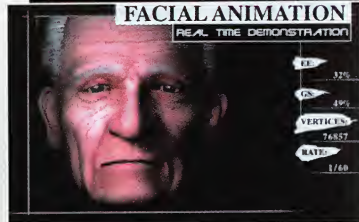
And although each demo was created in a short period of time, they were all frighteningly impressive showcases of the potential of PSX2. It's easy to assume that companies like Namco and Square, famous for their in-house CG, are ecstatic with the powerful hardware. No longer will their CG masterpieces be limited to non-interactive video playback.

In fact, one of Namco's esteemed Producers, Yamada-san, described the PSX2 as "hardware that challenges hardware." Indeed. The PSX2's specifications easily outmuscle the Dreamcast architecture, crush the N64 hardware, and even outperform a Pentium 3/Voodoo 3 combination. Not only were the executives of SCE present at the conference, but even top dogs like Norio Taiga and President Nobuyuki Idei (the highest executives of the SONY group) were in attendance. They said with strong determination and absolute confidence that the company will devote all its energy and time to the business of the new PlayStation console. Sony have already capitalized Toshiba's Oita factory to manufacture the PSX2's main chip, and their own Nagasaki factory (where the Graphic Synthesizer is being produced) is currently 100 percent capitalized at 583 million dollars. They're also set to the shoulder the cost of .18 micron DRAM starting late this fall; things are well under control.

What does this mean for Sega and Nintendo? Well, Sega is sure to move on in Japan with a strong presence, thanks to big-time titles like *Shenmue*. They should be seriously considering the "totally expandable" Dreamcast hardware, though. A hard-drive here, expansion RAM and DVD-ROM there, and they could easily hang on through Sony's bomb dropping. As for the US Dreamcast strategy...start crossing your fingers, SOA. You have a serious fight ahead. And amidst all of the chaos, Nintendo once again watches from a distance, preparing a serious piece of hardware for mass-market consumption. It's happening again, isn't it?

Another Square demo, giving us an idea of what the future holds for us hardcore fighting fans. If it plays even half as good as it looks, sign us up!

For example: Polyphony borrowed some of the CG models used in their original *Gran Turismo* game and compiled gorgeous racing scenes, Namco reps had an amazing interactive demo of Paul and Jin (from *Tekken*) fighting it out in front of a huge 3D crowd (they played using standard Dual Shocks!), and Square had the obligatory *Final Fantasy* presence with both game and movie models animated within stunning backdrops – all using the real-time horsepower of the PSX2. Square even commissioned Dream Factory to do a PSX2 demo—a fighting game, of course—showing manic hyper-



And although each demo was created in a short period of time, they were all frighteningly impressive showcases of the potential of PSX2. It's easy to assume that companies like Namco and Square, famous for their in-house CG, are ecstatic with the powerful hardware. No longer will their CG masterpieces be limited to non-interactive video playback.

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QUICK, ROBIN, TO THE NGP BAT MOBILE!

On February 15 at the Osaka branch office, SNK held a special private show to unveil the Neo Geo Pocket Color...



All the titles for its March 19 launch were playable, including *KOF R2*, *Pocket Tennis* and *Puzzle Bobble Mini*. As expected, the quality of this portable game machine was very high, which would explain why over 20 companies, including Sega, SCE, Namco and Capcom have signed up to develop for it. This year alone SNK hopes to have nearly 100 titles lined up for release, although unfortunately only two of them (*KOF R2* and *Cool Boarders*) are currently scheduled to be Dreamcast compatible.

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PSYCHIC TEEN SAVES US!

Set for release on March 11 is SNK's second totally original home title, *Athena*...



...a *Psychic Adventure* for the PlayStation. Set in the Year 2000, the heroine is a 16-year-old school girl whose normal everyday life is changed forever when she discovers she has psychic powers. Developing your psychic abilities you must overcome sinister forces threatening the world in this intriguing game that's already won high praise from many in Japan. More on this next month.

© SNK 1999,



RESIDENT TRESPASSER

Capcom of Japan announced that they would release a panic horror game...

(as opposed to survival horror) called *Dino Crisis* sometime this summer for PlayStation. Shinji Mikami, producer of the *BioHazard (Resident Evil)* series, describes the game as one that can give players a "jet-coaster-like fear". In *Resident Evil*, zombies were the main enemy characters, but in *Dino Crisis*, you will be dealing with nimble yet powerful dinosaurs, sort of a *Jurassic Park* meets *Resident Evil*. It's a match made in silicon heaven. More info as it becomes available.

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DREAMS OF DISKS TRUE

Sega have just sent out volume one of their free GD-ROM to those users...

...who've registered as a Dreamcast Partner. What you get are three special movies (*Shenmue*, the making of the Dreamcast song with Yukawa Senmu, and *Blue Stinger*), five new game



movies (*Geist Force*, *Gamera Battle*, *Marvel vs. Capcom*, *Psychic Force 2012* and *Puyo Puyo 4*) and one competi-

tion to win some *Shenmue* goods. You also get three demo games: *Aero Dancing* and *Pop'n Music* were quite good, but *Buggy Heat* was pretty bad, which explains why they've pushed its release back.

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FINAL FROZEN FANTASY

On February 12, Square announced that due to a programming bug...

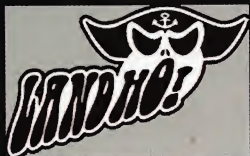


...it was possible to actually crash *FF VIII*. The problem area is on Disc 3 where, if a certain battle scene in the Central Ruins is not resolved within a fixed time limit and you try to fight the same battle again, the screen will freeze. Square are advising people who are unable to finish the fight in time to select Game Over and start again. Although the chances of this problem occurring are small, over 6,000 cases

have already been reported and Square has had to set up a special hotline to deal with users' inquiries.

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APOLOGIES!



Many apologies for forgetting to caption the photograph of the Land Ho members who were in last month's interview. From left to right: Mr. Daisaku Ikejiri, Mr. Tomohiro Kondo and Mr. Atsuhiko Nakamura.

SHOW? GO!

This month sees the long-awaited Tokyo Game Show Spring '99...



...with speculation at fever pitch as to how SCE will combat Sega's Dreamcast. Overall there are 82 companies showing 180 PS titles, 32 DC titles and 12 N64 titles, as well as many others. Of course there will be many surprise announcements at the show, but some of the confirmed big name games at the show include *Shenmue*, *Bust a Move 2*, *Saga Frontier 2*, *Go by Train 2* and *Dragon Valor*, amongst others.

MY FUNNY VALENTINE

It's not all work and no play for our good-for-nothing overseas editor...

Come Valentine's day, he was the proud receiver of a delicious box of chocolates from none other than Ms. Hazuki Ishigaki, the beautiful young actress who does the voice for Rei Shenhua in *Shenmue*. Luckily, we managed to take this photo before he ate the lot, but it was a close call!



NAMCO'S BALANCING ACT

Namco's latest arcade wonder, "Balance Try," is none other than a machine...

...that measures your balance. Consisting of a skateboard-like seesaw device which wobbles when you stand on it, you must avoid touching the ground for as long as possible. Maybe a little too simple for our regular readers but we recommend trying it after a few beers for a real challenge!



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WAIT FOR SPACE

After originally postponing last year's Nintendo Space World Show until May...



...this year, Nintendo have pushed it back again, this time until August 27-29. In its place there will be a special

Pocket Monster Festival held at various places across the country from March 27 to April 29. One of the reasons for this is to allow sufficient time after the release of the Silver and Gold Pocket Monster (scheduled for June), so that they can give a special Pocket Monster as a present at the NSW Show. Our guess is that it'll be the Pokemon X from the this year's Pocket Monster movie.



POWER STONES PRIMED!

Starting April 3, Capcom's first Naomi title becomes its own top anime series...



...on the TBS channel. Running on the prime 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. time slot on Saturday will ensure it gets maximum publicity, which in turn should push sales of the Dreamcast version as well. With the animation being done by Studio Pierott and the music production handled by AVEX (a leading music label in Japan) we're expecting this to be a high quality series.

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APRIL FOOLS REVEALED!

Yes, as expected, in Issue 11 of Gamers' Republic, there were a few naughty April Fools japes. Unfortunately, the Sat-Cast was but a figment of our overzealous imagination, and although entirely feasible, it just doesn't exist! Secondly, the "play as Doraemon" code for *Mario Party* was also a fakey so please stop wasting your time buying those mini-games! Ha! Gotcha!

TOMBA TAKES OVER!

For those wondering whatever happened to the prizes...

...for our Tomba Sweepstakes competition back in Issue 8, you'll be glad to know that they've finally arrived in our Japanese office. Although currently



causing no end of problems for our overseas editor, who has now had to make new sleeping arrangements to cope with a lack of floor space in the bedroom, rest assured we'll have them on the next plane possible and sent off to all you lucky winners!

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designed by the italians.

*no wonder it's attracted
to anything with curves.*

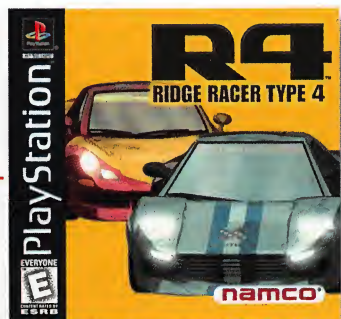


05...04...03...02...01



"R4 has to be the best-looking PlayStation racer ever (yes, edging out even Gran Turismo)."
 - Official PlayStation Magazine, December 1998

"The first great racer of 1999 could be a *Gran Turismo Killer*."
 - Official PlayStation Magazine, February 1999



It is speed incarnate. Its sexy sheet metal restrains a 3000 cc power plant that hits 0-190 mph in the snap of a linguini. It is the Bisonte - just one of the automotive marvels that scorch the streets in R4. With over 300 new cars, 45 fantastic models, 8 thrilling courses, a 2-player split-screen mode and only one way to drive. Fast. R4's asphalt gulping graphics and spectacular racing environments deliver racing speeds that were once deemed impossible. But not anymore. Now you've got R4. Ciao, baby.



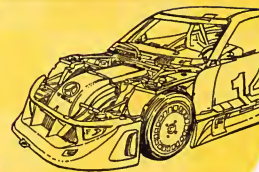
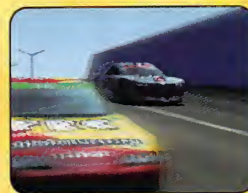
Think fast. Drive faster.



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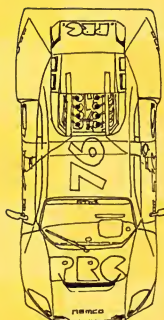
- Sensational graphics and lighting effects give every race a cinematic feel
- Race at all times of day and night, even during dramatic sunsets
- Relive your greatest moments through the dynamic-camera replay mode.
- Watch your race with all-new motion-blur effects



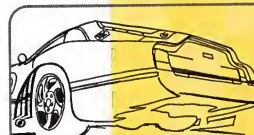
- Battle head-to-head in split-screen vs. mode



- Speed-tuned physics keep the arcade-style action fast-paced
- Championship performances unlock secret hidden supercars
- Don't be afraid to bump the other car, it's all part of a winning strategy
- Join one of four international race teams - each with individual strengths and weaknesses
- Design original logos to customize your car



- Race on gorgeous cityscape, countryside and racetrack courses



- Money can't buy victory. You've got to earn new cars with your race performance
- Experience all the ups and downs of a full racing season in the Grand Prix mode
- Includes a Ridge Racer Turbo Mode bonus disc with 8 60 FPS tracks



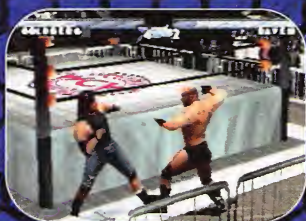
database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS



top ten best selling playstation titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 WCW/NWO THUNDER THQ | 6 CRASH BANDICOOT 2 SONY |
| 2 FROGGER HASBRO | 7 CRASH BANDICOOT WARPED SONY |
| 3 GRAN TURISMO RACING SONY | 8 WCW NITRO THQ |
| 4 METAL GEAR SOLID KONAMI | 9 SPYRO THE DRAGON SONY |
| 5 RUGRATS THQ | 10 NBA LIVE '99 EA |

Th•Q's latest wrestling title has a stranglehold on the competition... But what's with Frogger? You'd think he'd have a hard time crossing in front of Gran Turismo...

top ten best selling nintendos64 titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT NINTENDO | 6 ROGUE SQUADRON NINTENDO |
| 2 CASTLEVANIA KONAMI | 7 WCW/NWO REVENGE THQ |
| 3 MARIO PARTY NINTENDO | 8 MARIO KART 64 NINTENDO |
| 4 GOLDENEYE 007 NINTENDO | 9 SUPER MARIO 64 NINTENDO |
| 5 SOUTHPARK ACCLAIM | 10 BATTLE TANX 3DO |



A remarkable successor to a remarkable surrogate, Zelda will undoubtedly continue its march at the top for months. Link will not respect Cartman's authori-lah!!

top ten best selling saturn titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 CROC: LEGEND OF GOBBOS FOX | 6 MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH WD |
| 2 NHL '97 EA | 7 NIGHTS W/CONTROL PAD SEGA |
| 3 MADDEN '97 EA | 8 SONIC 3D BLAST SEGA |
| 4 ST FIGHTER: THE MOVIE ACCLAIM | 9 NBA LIVE '98 EA |
| 5 IRON MAN X-O MANOWAR ACCLAIM | 10 GRID RUNNER VIRGIN |

Croc continues to rule no-mans land while Rayearth begins to ascend the charts...

top ten best selling pc titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999

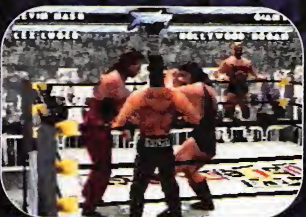
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|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 BALDUR'S GATE INTERPLAY | 6 FLIGHT SIM. '98 MICROSOFT |
| 2 DEER HUNTER 2 WIZARDWORKS | 7 COMBAT FLIGHT SIM. MS |
| 3 CABELA'S B.G.H. HEAD GAMES | 8 MYTH 2 BUNGIE |
| 4 STARCRAFT: BROODWARS BLIZZARD | 9 MONOPOLY HASBRO |
| 5 HALF-LIFE SIERRA | 10 SIMCITY 3000 MAXIS |

Finally, the TPT title gets knocked on its rifle butt as Baldur's Gate takes its rightful place as king of the PC RPG!



top ten overall console

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 WCW/NWO THUNDER-PS THQ | 6 POKEMON BLUE-GBOY NINTENDO |
| 2 ZELDA:OoT-N64 NINTENDO | 7 GOLDENEYE 007-N64 NINTENDO |
| 3 FROGGER-PS HASBRO | 8 GRAN TURISMO RACING-PS SONY |
| 4 CASTLEVANIA-N64 KONAMI | 9 METAL GEAR SOLID-PS KONAMI |
| 5 MARIO PARTY-N64 NINTENDO | 10 SOUTHPARK-N64 ACCLAIM |

world republic top ten games



Japan



- 1 FINAL FANTASY VIII PS
- 2 SMASH BROS. N64
- 3 DRAGONQUEST MONSTERS GB
- 4 TUNING CAR BATTLE PS
- 5 SIMPLE 1500 SERIES VOL. 1 PS
- 6 SEGA RALLY 2 DC
- 7 PIKACHU GENKIDESHOU N64
- 8 DUEL MONSTERS GB
- 9 SPACE CRUISER YAMATO PS
- 10 POKEMON CARDS GB

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MARCH 12-19, 1999

United Kingdom



- 1 METAL GEAR SOLID PS
- 2 A BUG'S LIFE PS
- 3 ROGUE SQUADRON N64
- 4 ALPHA CENTAURI PC
- 5 FIFA '99 PS/PC
- 6 SIM CITY 3000 PC
- 7 GRAND THEFT AUTO PS/PC
- 8 PREMIER MANAGER '99 PS
- 9 ZELDA: OoT N64
- 10 TOMB RAIDER: PLATINUM PS/PC

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 1999

gamers' republic top ten games

BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH FEBRUARY 8, 1999



d. Inalverson



- 1 THOUSAND ARMS PS
- 2 PSYCHIC FORCE 2012 DC
- 3 POWER STONE DC
- 4 SONIC ADVENTURE DC
- 5 SILENT HILL PS
- 6 LUNAR PS
- 7 MONACO GP 2 DC
- 8 SMASH BROS. N64
- 9 CASTLEVANIA 64 N64
- 10 GEX: DEEP CVR GECKO PS



b. Williams



- 1 AVP PC
- 2 SILENT HILL PS
- 3 POWER STONE DC
- 4 SMASH BROS. N64
- 5 METAL GEAR SOLID PS
- 6 KIRBY'S ALL-STARS SF
- 7 ILLUSION OF GAIA SF
- 8 D&D COLLECTION SS
- 9 RRT4 PS
- 10 SUPER MARIO WORLD SF



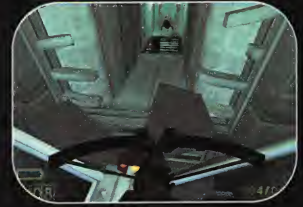
b. Siechter



- 1 LUNAR PS
- 2 ABE'S EXODUS PS
- 3 POWER STONE DC
- 4 D&D COLLECTION SS
- 5 PUYO PUYON DC
- 6 CASTLEVANIA NES
- 7 CASTLEVANIA IV SNES
- 8 SILENT HILL PS
- 9 LODERUNNER N64
- 10 SONIC ADVENTURE DC



e. Sear



- 1 HALF-LIFE PC
- 2 AVP PC
- 3 SUPER MARIO BROS. DLX. GBC
- 4 MEDIEVIL PS
- 5 SEGA RALLY 2 DC
- 6 RECOIL PC
- 7 QUAKE II PC
- 8 DUNE NUKEM GBC
- 9 GRAN TURISMO PS
- 10 NEW COLORS!! GBC



m. Hobbs



- 1 POWER STONE DC
- 2 SILENT HILL PS
- 3 RRT4 PS
- 4 AVP PC
- 5 SEGA RALLY 2 DC
- 6 MONACO GP 2 DC
- 7 PUYO PUYON DC
- 8 AERO DANCING DC
- 9 SONIC ADVENTURE DC
- 10 STUNT RACE FX SNES



-SPECIAL GUEST- henrietta nomsquatch



- 1 SILENT HILL PS
- 2 SOUTH PARK N64
- 3 CASTLEVANIA 64 N64
- 4 BUCK BUMBLE N64
- 5 SMASH BROS. N64
- 6 MEDIEVIL PS
- 7 TAI FU PS
- 8 BEETLE ADV. RACING N64
- 9 GEX 3 PS
- 10 QUEST 64 N64



e. pratte



- 1 POWER STONE DC
- 2 QUAKE 2 PC
- 3 PSYCHIC FORCE 2012 DC
- 4 QUAKE PC
- 5 UNREAL PC
- 6 VAMPIRE SAVIOR SATURN
- 7 PLASMA SWORD ARCADE
- 8 MAME 32 PC
- 9 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 ARCADE
- 10 S.F. EX 2 ARCADE



m. Grissin



- 1 POWER STONE DC
- 2 AVP PC
- 3 EVERQUEST PC
- 4 SONIC ADVENTURE DC
- 5 TECHNOMOTOR SS
- 6 GUARDIAN HEROES SS
- 7 D&D COLLECTION SS
- 8 RR4 PS
- 9 AERO DANCING DC
- 10 ERGHEIZ PS

"PLAYSTATION 2"

OUR FIRST LOOK INTO SONY'S REVOLUTIONARY NEW 128-BIT HARDWARE

With all the hype surrounding the recent unveiling of the PlayStation 2 in Japan, it seems like the logical time to take the opportunity to discuss a few of the high points of the presentation and their relevance from a technical standpoint. However, keep in mind that the PlayStation 2 will not be out for a year even in Japan, and specs can change a lot between tech demos a year before release and game engines when the hardware is actually out.

Smooth Curves?

One of the more interesting aspects of the PlayStation 2 specs (aside from the backwards compatibility and DVD support) is the advertised support for curved surface rendering. Based on the facts that the curved surface support is mentioned as a part of the CPU specs rather than the GPU specs, and that the press release states that the CPU can handle "16 million polygons/sec" when doing curved surface rendering, it seems likely that the PlayStation 2 employs a method I mentioned back in last November's column, which is to break up the surface into polygons in real time, using as many polygons as needed

processor is still just drawing polygons. A subtler advantage is that, if implemented properly, it can make rendering very efficient, since you only draw as many polygons as are needed to keep things looking smooth, and don't have to draw the same number when an object is far away as when it is close up. The difficulties are that the process of breaking up the surface is tough on the CPU, and it is also hard to control how many polygons are generated, so that if some particularly complex models get very close, you might have to draw more polygons than the renderer can handle, potentially causing slowdown. However, assuming Sony has found a way around these hangups, it will be very interesting to see if and how curved surfaces actually find their way into games, and what the impact is on the overall appearance.

The Namco Demos

The Namco demos look as good as they do through a combination of rendering power and top-notch artists. For instance, one reason the Namco girl's face looked so convincing was the highlights, most noticeable in making the lipstick look as glossy as it should. It was difficult to tell, however, whether this was the result of realtime lighting (which would constitute something of a technical



eled, which is tough on the GPU, and how fluidly and convincingly each lock of hair moves, which takes a substantial amount of calculating power on the CPU's part. Similarly, in the *Gran Turismo* part of the demo, the two most impressive parts were car detail, which is largely a result of sheer rendering performance, and the beautiful reflections on the car bodies, which is somewhat computational, but, speaking from a technical standpoint, nothing that hasn't been done before. They appear to simply be using a technique of per-



TECHFRONT

BY BRIAN OSSERMAN

depending on how close up the object is. The advantages of this are that models can stay smooth at any distance, and a new rendering technique isn't necessary, since the graphics

accomplishment, albeit nothing revolutionary), or whether the highlights were simply part of the lip texture, which would be more a case of talented artists. In the model detail department, the most impressive part was her hair, which appears to have been done by first modeling a number of separate locks of hair in 3D, and then texturing each one with a very high resolution, partially transparent texture to give the appearance of individual hairs being rendered (the latter trick is being used in both *Shen Mue* and *Dead or Alive 2* on the Dreamcast/NAOMI as well). From a technical standpoint, the impressive part is the numbers of different locks of hair mod-

spective-dependent textures, where, in addition to the normal textures that give the cars their basic color and detail, there is a second texture that is some approximation of what might be seen reflected in a car (in the PlayStation 2 demo, this consists mainly of white highlights of various shapes and sizes) which is combined with the regular texture, depending on the angle of the car and the viewer to give an impression of a glossy car body. Here, Polyphony used very artistic choices of reflection textures combined with very nicely modeled cars to produce an amazingly realistic effect overall.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for topics you'd like to see covered, please email techfront@gamersrepublic.com.





Wild game, baby.

Next party, lose the piñata. New Point Blank™ 2 allows up to 8 of your gun-crazed pals to unload on over 70 wild and wacky shooting scenarios - from fish and fowl to ninjas and gangsters. Blast through an all-new Arcade Mode, Theme Park Mode, Endurance Mode - plus a VS. Mode for the perfect head-to-head (no pun intended) party game. Point Blank 2. Time to get pistol whipped.



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LUNAR

SILVER STAR STORY

COMPLETE



An Epic Adventure A Timeless Romance An Instant Classic

- ★ *Four Disc Collector's Edition!
Includes: 2 Game CDs, 1 Music CD,
and 1 Exclusive "Making of LUNAR" CD!*
- ★ *50+ Minutes of Incredible Animation!*
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Artbook/Instruction Manual!
Including an Exclusive Excerpt
from the Official Hintbook!*
- ★ *Full-color Cloth Map!*



WORKING DESIGNS®

Our games go to 11!™

LUNAR

silver star story complete



Kyle

A leader of a renegade band of loyal followers, Kyle has pledged to protect the Nanza Barrier. He has a soft spot for Jessica, yet his ego and womanizing ways are constantly pushing her away. About the only thing he loves as much as the female figure is a good mug of ale.



Alex

The precocious hero of the game, Alex dreams of becoming a Dragonmaster and exploring his vast world in search of adventure. Growing up in the small town of Burg has left him somewhat sheltered, yearning to experience the same excitement he hears of in the stories of the legendary Dragonmaster Dyne.



Jessica

A confident and aggressive young woman, Jessica is not afraid to speak her mind. She yearns for independence and expression, but her deep love and reverence for her father tend to keep her bound to his sometimes opposing wishes.



A good role playing game inhabits a place in the imagination that no other game seems capable of finding. Like a great fairytale that sweeps us away into another world, the very best examples of the genre come alive with intrepid heroes, sidekicks, colorful characters and places, soaring quests and the discovery of great mysteries. Lunar: Silver Star Story, a classic adventure released almost six years ago on the fledgling and underappreciated Sega CD, embodied everything that makes a great RPG such a consuming experience. But, unfortunately, in an ocean of 16 bit gamers, the majority of whom took their RPG dollar to the Square-dominated Super Nintendo, Lunar barely made a wave when Working Designs transported it to American shores from its Japanese roots; one of the finest RPGs of its time bypassed the wide audience it deserved.

As a prime candidate for the ritual of updating a classic, it seems only fitting that Lunar is coming to the PlayStation as a remake entitled Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete. It was really only a matter of time before Lunar would be resurrected. Reflecting on why Game Arts chose to transplant Lunar to the PlayStation, Yohichi Miyaji, CEO of Game Arts, says quite simply, "Whenever there is a better means of expression available, we will use it.... And that is why we made the PlayStation version." And express themselves they did. Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete is more than a ritual update, more than a typical editor's cut; it is an extensive remake, in many regards a new experience. And now, with its upcoming release for a system that boasts a user base that makes the days of the Sega CD look like an underground movement, the Lunar universe will



Relive the memories or experience the world of Lunar for the first time... The Sega CD classic returns, better than ever

have a chance to not only find that deserved audience, but reach the minds of more gamers than Game Arts could only have dreamed of when they first formed their Lunar vision over eight years ago – an eternity on the gaming calendar.

The differences between the original Sega CD version of *Lunar* and this newer PlayStation version are in some ways subtle, in other ways quite dramatic. As Kei Shigema, writer and one of the individuals instrumental in bringing the original *Lunar* to life, points out, "In terms of imagery, there is quite a bit of upgrading, so there's no comparison." Initially, the pleasing hand-drawn artwork may not strike you as dramatically altered, but if you go back to the Sega CD to compare the enhancements that have been made to the look of *Lunar*, the differences are explicit. While most locations and settings are familiar, based on the original game, the updated *Silver Star Story Complete* displays a world that will seem in many ways new and uncharted, even to fans of the original game.

While by no means revolutionary or sparkling with the wow factor, *Silver Star Story's* pleasing look is demonstrably post-16 bit. The special attention paid to enhancing the game's visuals will perhaps matter less to *Lunar* fans revisiting *Silver Star's* world than to today's sophisticated gamer, weaned on the flash of 32-bit games and lacking the significant element of nostalgia. But, no matter what your history with video games, the story of Lunar and its exceptional presentation are what imbue the game with a universal RPG appeal. Like *Silver Star Story*, this update tells the tale of Alex, a young adventurer who dreams of becoming the next Dragonmaster. His world is one of arcane magic and majestic dragons, a place of uncommon peace and seclusion. Of course, tranquility is not about to last forever, and Alex and the friends he makes along the path of his journey become entangled in the calamitous ways of the Magic Emperor and the Vile Tribe.

The same basic plot elements return to *Silver Star Story Complete*, but the story is built on new dialogue, takes surprising turns, introduces altered scenarios, and occasionally branches into subquests. In some ways, the story is entirely new. As Shigema points out, "From the Sega CD version of *Lunar* to the PS version of *Lunar*, we have rewritten the latter half completely. The biggest difference is the description of the heroine, Luna."

Part of the game's storytelling flows from animated sequences that play during key moments in the game. But while the first game offered only around three minutes of cut scenes, *Silver Star Story Complete* boasts as much as an hour of involving animations that work to complete the effect of the story-

lunar
silver star story



Luna

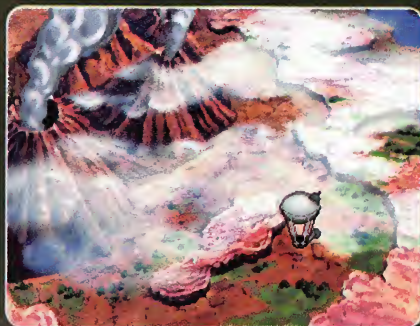
Magical in its purity and beauty, Luna's singing is renowned. Growing up with Alex in Burg, Luna has developed a very special relationship with him that runs deeper than the two are able to fully express. She is a sincere, caring person who harbors many unanswered questions about herself.



Nall

People often mistake Nall for a cat, which, to him, is a complete insult. It doesn't take much to annoy this furry winged creature, but anyone with a plate of fish is guaranteed to be considered a friend. A companion to Alex since he was a child, Nall's insistence to always be by Alex's side proves invaluable with his gift of resurrection.





Live the adventures of the hero Alex as he dreams of becoming the next Dragonmaster

telling. When you meet one of the four dragons, when one of the many characters enter the scene, the drama of the moment is invaluable heightened.

There is something to be said about complexity in a game, but sometimes simplicity is what can really flesh out the enjoyment. Take *Silver Star Story* for the case in point. In a game set on the foundation of an RPG as old as the first *Lunar*, you can't expect a battle system full of ingenuity and modern touches, but one that is surprisingly engaging in its antiquity. Familiarity and simplicity underpin the battles, which follow a rudimentary turn-based confrontation that transpires through weapons, magic, and special techniques. All the basics are covered: experience points, level ups, various character attributes, magic points and hit points.

Some of the creatures found in the original game return to *Silver Star Story Complete* along with a host of new enemies, designed with a style that owes much to classic 16-bit. They range from the unspectacular—increased animation would do wonders—to the impressive—boss enemies are drawn quite well. Unlike in the random confrontations in the first *Lunar*, enemies can be seen roaming the area, and if you're quick enough, a fight can occasionally be avoided.

One of the more original and unique elements of *Lunar* is the theme of music that's woven into various sections of the plot. The gift of song is considered a powerful and often magical device in the game. It is only natural that particular attention was paid to developing an emotional and expansive score for *Lunar*, ensuring that the player completely lose themselves in the game. "*Lunar: Silver Star*



Nash

Confidence is not a quality lacking in Nash. As a magician serving under the teachings of the great Ghaleon of Vane, Nash considers himself a privileged member of the elite. He is narcissistic, brash, and quick to speak without regard to tact.





Story included about 38 songs or pieces of music, and among them, a main song emerged, which was the song of the festival that Luna sang by the natural spring," says composer Noriyuki Iwadare, who has been a part of the Lunar team from the very beginning. "This was a very important song in the game, and the image it created was one that I wanted to keep. All the other songs were remade according to the image of Luna that existed in my mind. These amounted to over 100 pieces of music."

In any involving RPG, to truly enjoy the experience is to believe in the characters and the places they inhabit. *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete* introduces us to many likeable characters who pass through Alex's party, offering great moments that cling to us. Its towns, caves, forests and towers feel as one complete world, not just disjointed stop-off points to carry out a task and move on. What *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete* is able to achieve—the completeness of the experience, the sense of belonging to the events in the story—is quite remarkable considering that the game is no modern wonder. The game breaks no grounds, sets no new standards, at times tends to show some age – and is everything that made the original Lunar such a classic. ✨

Ramus

A good friend of Alex who wants nothing more out of life than a bounty of wealth, Ramus is constantly in search of his big break. The son of the village elder, Ramus is constantly in a struggle to please his father, who sees his son as a hopeless failure.

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Sega CD



Old VS. New

As you can see in these comparison shots, *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete* has undergone major changes in its visuals since the world of Lunar was first introduced to American gamers on the Sega CD.

While the game is not meant to compete with the flair of more recent 32-bit RPGs, it is still a wonderful achievement in its classic, charming details. And for the gamers who cherish the art of making a 2D world, *Lunar* will be even more appealing; it's probably one of the last RPGs of its kind.



Playstation

YOUR ROOM IS WAITING

EVERY TOWN HAS ITS SECRETS...SOME ARE DARKER THAN OTHERS.
WELCOME TO SILENT HILL. PLEASE CHECK YOUR SANITY AT THE DOOR.
YOU'RE HARRY MASON. YOU'VE CRASHED YOUR CAR OUTSIDE OF TOWN.
YOUR DAUGHTER IS MISSING. AND SOON YOU DISCOVER SILENT HILL
IS NO ORDINARY QUIET TOWN. IN FACT, IT'S A LITTLE TOO QUIET.
PASS BETWEEN THE "REAL" WORLD AND A DEMONIC NIGHTMARISH
WORLD, RENDERED IN REAL-TIME 3D, WHERE YOU'LL BE
ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT...AND THE EDGE OF MADNESS.



Don't be afraid of the dark.
Be afraid of what it's hiding.



Use your brain. Use your brawn. And
find your lost daughter, before you
also lose your mind.



Friend or fiend? Is anything
what it seems in this town?



SILENT HILL™



aou 1999

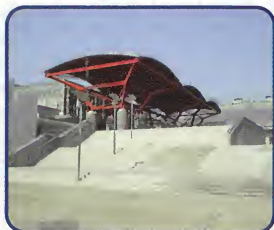
all nippon amusement machine operators union

..... Special exclusive arcade report from Japan!
GR represents in the land of the rising sun!!



Over the 17th and 18th of February, the AOU Amusement Expo 1999 was the center of excitement as massive crowds descended upon the Makuhari Messe in the hope of playing some of the hottest arcade titles ever seen. As the first arcade show of the year, the AOU Expo is an excellent insight into just how the arcade scene is going to shape up for the year, with everyone hoping to catch up with the latest gaming trends.

With ten dance, music and rhythm games, nine driving/racing games, eight sports games, seven puzzle/board games, six action games, five shooting games, four fighting games, three gun shooting games and one flight simulator, it was interesting to see the clear swing towards light entertainment games as opposed to the traditional hardcore titles, and although there were numerous sequels in the offering, originality was the order of the day.



SEGA captures the show with great Naomi offerings

Although the ever-popular Model 3 *Spikeout* and *Virtua Striker 2* were on show, Sega's Naomi attack has now officially started – the ever-increasing lineup of games for Sega's new arcade hardware is just the beginning. Not playable but shown on video was AM 2's new racing game, *F355 Challenge*, which is set to be the biggest Naomi racing game this year.

CRAZY TAXI - PICS 1, 2, 3

Created by the same AM 3 team that brought us *Top Skater* is this awesome go-anywhere comical driving game where you must take your customers to their desired destination as fast as possible by any route you wish.



This cab ride is crazier than anything you'd find in New York, but you'll have a better chance of understanding the driver...since it's you!



ALL NIPPON AMUSEMENT MACHINE OPERATORS UNION

AOU イベント情報

..... AM 1, the undisputed King of Naomi, had four playable games which dominated the Sega booth!.....



AIRLINE PILOTS - PICS 1, 2

Having worked with JAL, the leading airline company in Japan, Sega have created an incredibly realistic flight simulator that looks and plays just like the real thing. Using three Naomi boards shows that the Naomi doesn't necessary have to be low-end. This ultra deluxe cabinet looks like one of the most expensive cabinets we've seen for a long time and certainly reverses the trend towards simpler and cheaper cabinets.

SPINNING STONE PUZZLE BATTLE - PICS 3, 4

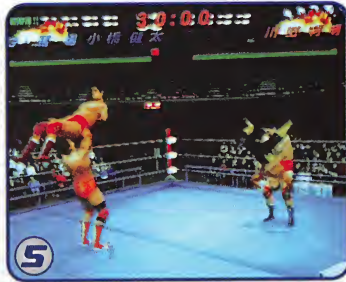
Showing that the Naomi is versatile enough for any genre, this is a simple but addictive puzzle game where you must spin the blocks to match up the colors to explode them away.

GIANT GRAM ALL JAPAN PRO-WRESTLING 2 - PICS 5, 6, 7

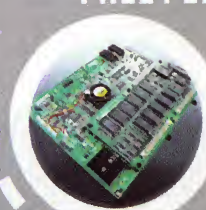
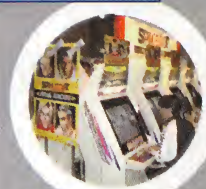
In conjunction with Sega's consumer division, this will be the first Naomi title to use the VM device in order to exchange data between the arcade and Dreamcast versions. The motion-captured wrestlers' motions are very smooth indeed.

ZOMBIE REVENGE - PICS 8, 9, 10

All but finished, this game should be out shortly in the arcades. Despite a second name change, the game remains largely unchanged from the AM Show, although we could now play through to later levels that were even more incredible. The perfect showcase for what the Naomi can do.



Sega shows skills in all game genres, including puzzle games. Time to play!



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TECMO shows off their new Naomi project with more bounce for the ounce!

The most eagerly awaited Naomi game of all is not from Sega but from Tecmo. Unfortunately, it still wasn't playable at the show, but Tecmo was able to show a video of various fight scenes taken directly from the Naomi board (this wasn't simply a CG promotional video), which gives us a very good idea of how it'll look and play.



PICS 4, 5 - She may be under-dressed, but even against Bass, Tina is more than capable of holding her own. After she wins she does a really cool winning pose routine.



PICS 8, 9 - Set inside a large cathedral-like setting, Jann-lee and Bass are fighting at the top before Jann-lee smashes Bass right through that large circular stain glass window and sends him plummeting several floors down. Yet another example of the expansive fighting environments in DOA2.



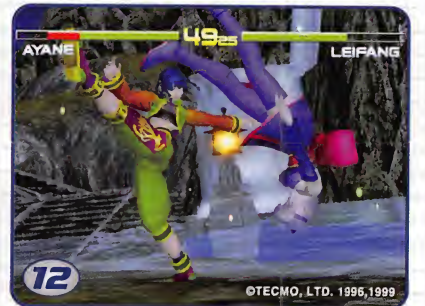
PICS 10, 11 - Compare this CG illustration from DOA++ to an actual DOA2 screen shot - they're almost the same quality!



PICS 6, 7, - DOA2 now appears to have an option for some kind of tag-match gameplay, although we don't know how this system works yet. Here we saw Tina giving Hayabusa a good beating before changing with Bass. Shortly after, Hayabusa changed with Ayane, who gave Bass a good beating. Why is it that the women always win?



PICS 1, 2, 3 - More than the characters themselves, it's the stage settings that are the most impressive. This stage starts at the top of a giant waterfall near an ancient temple. Gen-Fu kicks Hayabusa over the waterfall and then jumps down after him, continuing the confrontation at the bottom of the waterfall. Awesome!



PIC 12 - The various stages are set at different times of the day. Here we see Ayane and Lei Fang fighting at night as numerous fireflies hover around the area. Excellent lighting effects abound and really add to the mood of the fight.

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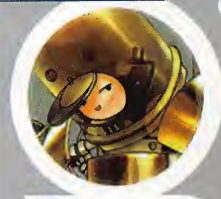
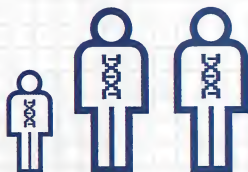
TREASURE We went digging for Treasure and here's what we got!



Although not playable, *Gun Beat* was shown on video at the Sega booth and, even in its very early form, still showed a lot of promise. Treasure's second arcade game and their first Naomi title is a 3D-shooting racing game where the player must use various types of shot to defeat the various enemies and traps that obstruct the courses (City, Snowy Mountain and Ancient Ruins). In addition, you can compete against up to three rival players via a special four-cabinet link-up option for even more dramatic racing action. We'll have a full preview soon, but in the meantime, here are some pictures to whet your appetite.



It may be a stretch to see a Treasure game in the third dimension, but if these shots are any indication, the inimitable Treasure look and feel will no doubt remain intact.



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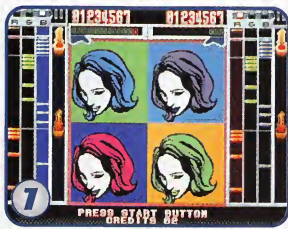


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KONAMI IF it's Funky, Fast, or lethal..... you can bet Konami's got it



Konami's arcade strategy remains unchanged for 1999 as they continue to release an avalanche of dance, music and rhythm games upon us. Although Konami continue to release a steady line of traditional driving, fighting and shooting games, it is these music games that are currently top in the arcade-ranking charts, making the most money.

GUITAR FREAKS - PIC 1
DRUM MANIA - PIC 2

These are Konami's biggest new titles. In particular, *Drum Mania* was voted one of the best games at the AOU Expo and, although slightly more difficult than trying to play a guitar, is definitely the most enjoyable.

BEATMANIA IIDX - PIC 3, POP'N MUSIC 2 - PIC 4, DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION 2ND MIX - PIC 5

All of last year's hits are back with new music, more buttons and new modes.

THRILL DRIVE - PICS 6, 7, 8

Driving normal cars on normal roads is the setting for this race game where the danger of a multi-car traffic accident is very real indeed. The most popular feature is a special end-of-game



report that marks the performance of your driving techniques throughout the race.

GRADIUS IV - RESURRECTION - PICS 9, 10

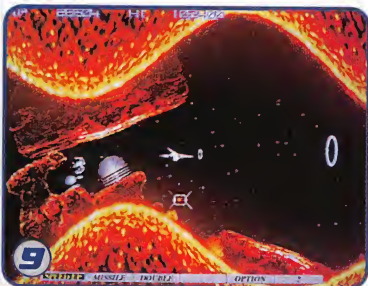
It's been ten long years since *Gradius III*, but the series is back at last. Although the graphics and sound are considerably enhanced, the gameplay remains nostalgically faithful to the series.

FISHERMAN'S BAIT - PICS 11

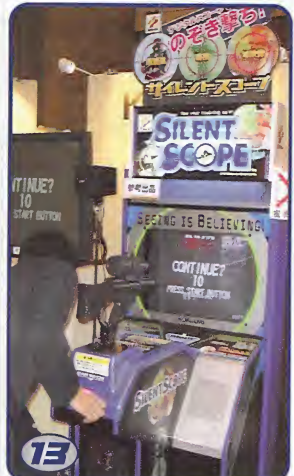
Konami's latest fishing game makes it debut.

SILENT SCOPE - PICS 12, 13

Become a sniper and take on vicious terrorists by using your special sniper rifle, which magnifies the images invisibly by just looking at the monitor. A very popular game and a surprise hit of the show.



It's all about teachin' the kids all about good driving techniques and proper gun handling. Just don't hit the innocents...oops. Oh well.



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NAMCOwith their Full range of 1999 offerings.. Namco shoot straight!



Making use of their new System Super 23 board in much of their line-up has allowed Namco to enhance the visual effects of their games. While an obvious choice for 500 GP, its subtler use in Angler King and Final Furlong 2 has allowed them to add extra features.

500 GP - PICS 1, 2, 3

Undoubtedly the most realistic-looking motorcycle race game yet from Namco, 500 GP has a very solid-feeling cabinet bike and accurately re-created circuits from around the world. Looks just like the real thing.

ANGLER KING - PICS 4, 5

A special hydraulic system gives powerful feedback to simulate the massive size of some of the incredible fish you can go after. This is probably the most fun you can have with a fishing rod.



FINAL FURLONG 2 - PICS 6, 7, 8, 9

More players, more horses, and various weather as well as three kinds of race give a wider variety of gameplay to this horse-racing sequel.

SUBMARINES - PICS 10, 11

Using a special high-quality TFT liquid crystal color display built into the periscope you must search for some hijacked nuclear submarines and destroy the terrorists by firing torpedoes. An exciting blast from the past.

POINT BLANK 2 - PICS 12, 13

With an additional 8 mini-games and recoil built into the guns, even those who own the PlayStation version might be tempted to have a go.



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Between the aquatic carnage above and the field targets (aka sheep) on the right, Namco's got plenty for you to draw a bead on.

TAITO GR goes by the Taito display to see that Taito goes by the competition!

After the massive success of *Go by Train!*, all eyes were on Taito to see what they would be do next. Their answer is a game based on Radio Control cars, which is a very popular hobby in Japan. Could this be the next big hit in Japanese arcades? We'll just have to wait and see.

BATTLE GEAR - PICS 1, 2, 3

The successor to the *Side by Side* series of racing games features six automakers allowing 21 of their cars to appear in the game. Now features a new Time Attack mode that generates a ghost car for the next player to race against.

SUPER PUZZLE BOBBLE - PICS 4, 5, 6

This fifth version of *Puzzle Bobble* has two new features: there are now both large and small bubbles to play with; and there's a two-player alliance mode where you can cooperate to solve a puzzle.

GO BY RC!! - PICS 7, 8, 9

The latest in Taito's *Go by* series is not a train but a radio-controlled car. With up to four players and 28 courses, there's plenty of scope for enthusiasts to enjoy themselves here.

TAITO G NET SYSTEM - PICS 10, 11

In an attempt to widen the appeal of the *Taito G NET* system board, Taito have started to license their usage to other third-party companies. In competition to Sony's PlayStation board and Sega's Naomi board, the *G NET* offers games on a card rather than a ROM, so it's very cost effective and easily upgradable. The first third-party game is a set of six board games from Success, but expect other companies to join soon.



It looks like Taito have the stage set for another strong collection of arcade games, including puzzle and racing games.



Here Taito show their adept grasp of the hardware side of the arcade biz with the easily upgraded G NET system.



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CAPCOMCapcom digs into the familiar to unearth classic delights



Having already got their first Naomi game out, Capcom are back to their traditional CP-SYSTEM II and III hardware for their next few games. With a general lack of fighting games at the show, Capcom's booth was a veritable fighting heaven for hardcore gamers.

STREET FIGHTER III 3RD STRIKE PICS 1, 2, 3

In probably its last incarnation, *SF III* returns with five new characters, including Chun-Li. A new "Grade Judge System" evaluates your fighting skills – but can you earn yourself an A++?

STRIDER - PIC 4?

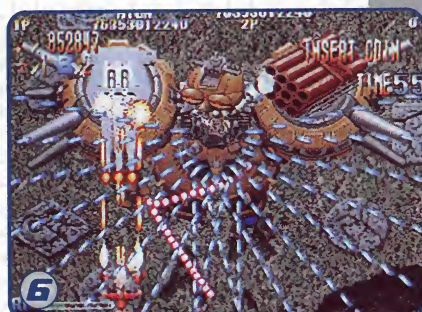
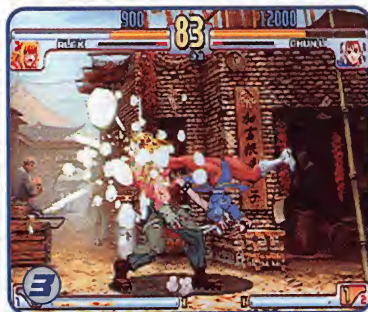
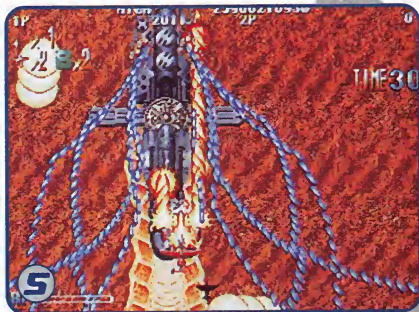
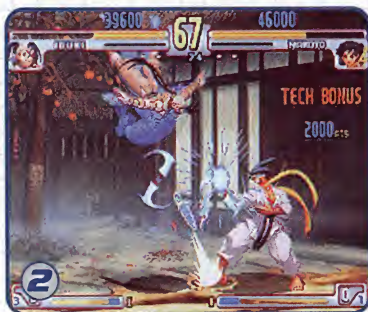
The biggest surprise of the show was a brief video sequence of a new *Strider* game. We can't say anything about it now but we expect it to be one of the biggest games this summer!

GIGA WING - PICS 5, 6

This game is attracting a lot of attention in Japan because the characters have been designed by famous manga artist Kei Toume, but behind the cool imagery is a solid shooting game with plenty of original features.

POWER STONE - PICS 7, 8, 9

To celebrate the release of *Power Stone*, Mr. Takeshi Tezuka (producer at the Development Team Department 1) – who appeared in last month's interview – and some of his development team have signed some great *Power Stone* goodies, including 10 posters, 10 pamphlets and five ultra-rare Secret File books (which can't be bought!). To win these items, send us a postcard with your name and address and the answer to this question: "Which character did Capcom want to put into *Power Stone* from the very beginning?"



Capcom's Power Stone looks to be an easy winner in the 1999 arcade game lineup. And we've got the cool Power Stone giveaways!



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TECMO From wacky to wild, Tecmo's stables are Full and they're ready to race!

FLAME GUNNER (GAPS) - PICS 1, 2, 3

Only on display at last year's AM Show, Flame Gunner is now fully playable and should be out in arcades soon. A very visually impressive two-player action game.

GALLOP RACER 3 (TECMO) - PICS 4, 5, 6

Tecmo's horse-racing game progresses even further with you now being able to watch the horses' behavior in the paddock so that you can judge their possible performance.

LOGIC PRO ADVENTURE (AMUSE WORLD) - PICS 7, 8, 9, 10

This crossword-style puzzle game is actually from a Korean company. Using the numbers at the top and right, you must clear away the blocks to reveal the picture. Over 2000 combinations from stunningly simple to outright impossibly hard.

KOTOBUKI GRAND PRIX (SYSCOM ENTERTAINMENT) PICS 11, 12

A light-hearted comical action racing game with a bunch of big-headed people from a pizza delivery man to a girl on bicycle battling it out on the streets.



INCREDIBLE CRISIS (TOKUMA SHOTEN) PICS 13, 14, 15

This crazy-looking comical-adventure action game involving an office worker and his family looks set to attract a wide audience with its wacky collection of mini-games.

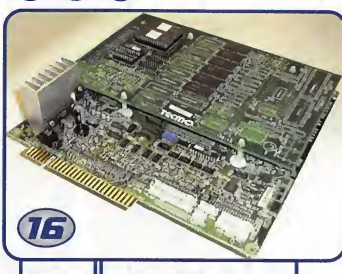
TPS BOARD - PICS 16

The Tecmo PlayStation System board

has become very popular with a wide variety of companies supporting it. The games on this page utilize the TPS, so expect all these titles to be available on the PlayStation shortly after their arcade release. Definitely a viable alternative to Sega's Naomi board.

RISING ZAN THE SAMURAI GUNMAN (UEP SYSTEM) PICS 17, 18, 19

This super ultra-sexy hero (according to the announcer) stars in this very atmospheric west-meets-east Ninja vs. Cowboy action adventure. Looks awesome.



Crazy races, sexy ninja shooters, and the latest hardware add up to a great year for Tecmo.



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..... It's the last page, but we're not done yet!
The Final roundup is still packed with power!



BATTLE BAKRAID (EIGHTING) - PICS 1, 2, 3, 4

One of the hottest new shooting games at the show was from masters of the genre, Eighting. Their latest game offers three courses (training, normal and advanced), each with a different number of random stages. In addition, power-up items give you up to six mini-ships whose formation around your main ship can be changed with a press of a button. (This AOU version is still under development and subject to change.)

PILOT KIDS (PSIKYO) - PICS 5, 6, 7

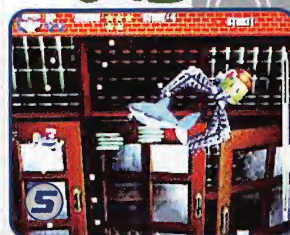
The now-complete Pilot Kids should be coming to the arcades very soon with its original and amusing world where you must battle against a house full of toys gone mad.

FATAL FURY WILD AMBITION (SNK) - PICS 8, 9, 10

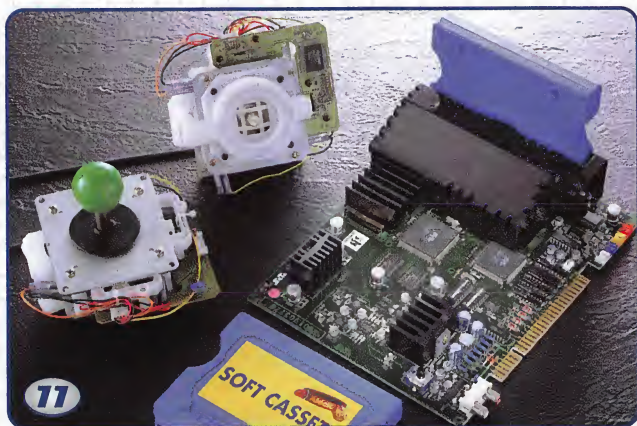
A quiet spell from SNK with only one game on show. Since they have announced that they will be developing on the Naomi could this be one of their last Hyper Neo Geo 64 games?

VARIANT SCHWANZER (SETA) PICS 11, 12

The first big game to come to the Aleck 64 (N64-based hardware board) is a great 3D shooter where, instead of ships, you get to fight against mysterious life forms in an Atlantis-like setting.



Shooters and fighters remain popular with arcade-goers, and companies like SNK and SETA are only too happy to oblige.



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shenmue 3

BY WARREN HARROD

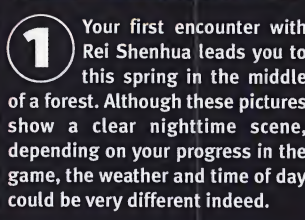
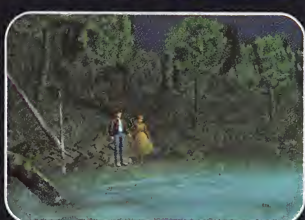
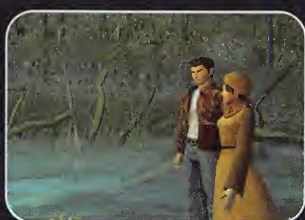
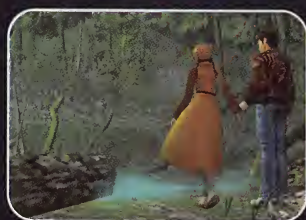
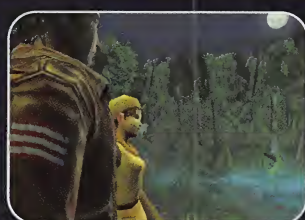


In this, part three of our overview of the Shenmue game system, we take a look at the view mode and free battle systems.

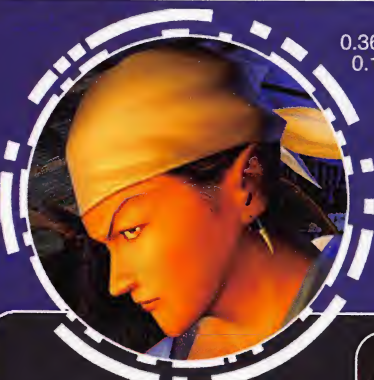
Unlike previous games where the quality of the in-game movies were always far superior to the actual game itself, *Shenmue* has been able to seamlessly blend actual gameplay CG with movie CG so that there is no visible difference at all. This kind of movie is called the View Mode in *Shenmue*.

Using the analog stick, the player is able to alter the camera's viewpoint during the View Mode and look around the surrounding area.

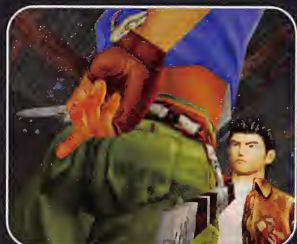
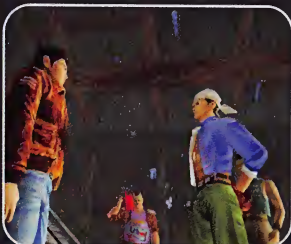
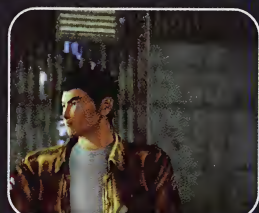
While usually this is nothing but an amusing feature, occasionally there will be things of importance that you'll need to look for. In addition, because all the View Mode scenes are calculated in real time, they depict the actual conditions of the time that events take place, and are not just fixed CG movies. For example, if you go somewhere at night or when it's snowing, the View Mode will create that scene at night or with snow. In this way everyone playing *Shenmue* could have a different View-Mode experience.



1 Your first encounter with Rei Shenhua leads you to this spring in the middle of a forest. Although these pictures show a clear nighttime scene, depending on your progress in the game, the weather and time of day could be very different indeed.



2 Here you come face-to-face with Ren Wuying and some of his street gang at an old warehouse in Hong Kong. Could it be that moving the camera's viewpoint reveals that he's holding a knife behind his back?



3 This dramatic confrontation between Iwao Hazuki and Souliu has been beautifully motion captured, so you can enjoy this fight sequence from any angle you wish. Notice the use of blur on Souliu's arms as he prepares to strike.





quick-time battle system: easy to learn, difficult to master. shenmue lends a cinematic quality to the fighting system.

Many people have worried that with only the Quick Time Battle system, they would be unable to fully appreciate the fighting action in *Shenmue*. However, for quite some time Yu Suzuki has been secretly working on a full, *Virtua Fighter*-like combat system as well, and at last the first few details have been revealed. This

new Free Battle mode is still under development and subject to change but the basic system is as follows:

While all the moves are in general based on *VF* (although there are plenty of new techniques as well), none of the motion for

any of the characters has been taken from *VF*; everything has been redone especially for *Shenmue* using even more advanced motion-capture technology.

Although the fight system uses a similar system to *VF*, it is much simpler so that even true beginners can enjoy it. The typical command would be just P or P+K. Even the most difficult command would be no more than P+K. However, instead of simple button complexity, they've added more depth to the fighting environment to make the fights more enjoyable.

Rather than the limited, artificial arenas of *VF*, you now have a full 3D world to fight in, which gives you endless more possibilities for excitement. Let's take a look at some of things you can do:



Just like *VF3*, you can dodge your opponent's attack and come around them.

dodging



kicking



The opponents realistically suffer from your attack by actually feeling pain.



Your opponents' responses are different depending on whether you kick or punch them, etc.



Your opponents have a variety of special holding moves as well.

You can now fight up to two or three opponents at the same time.



The different levels of terrain are a vital element to your strategy.

counters



You can counter your opponent's attack by literally "pushing" it away.

throws



Throw your opponents into objects around you or at other opponents.



At any time in the battle you can alter the viewpoint to search for hidden opponents, etc.

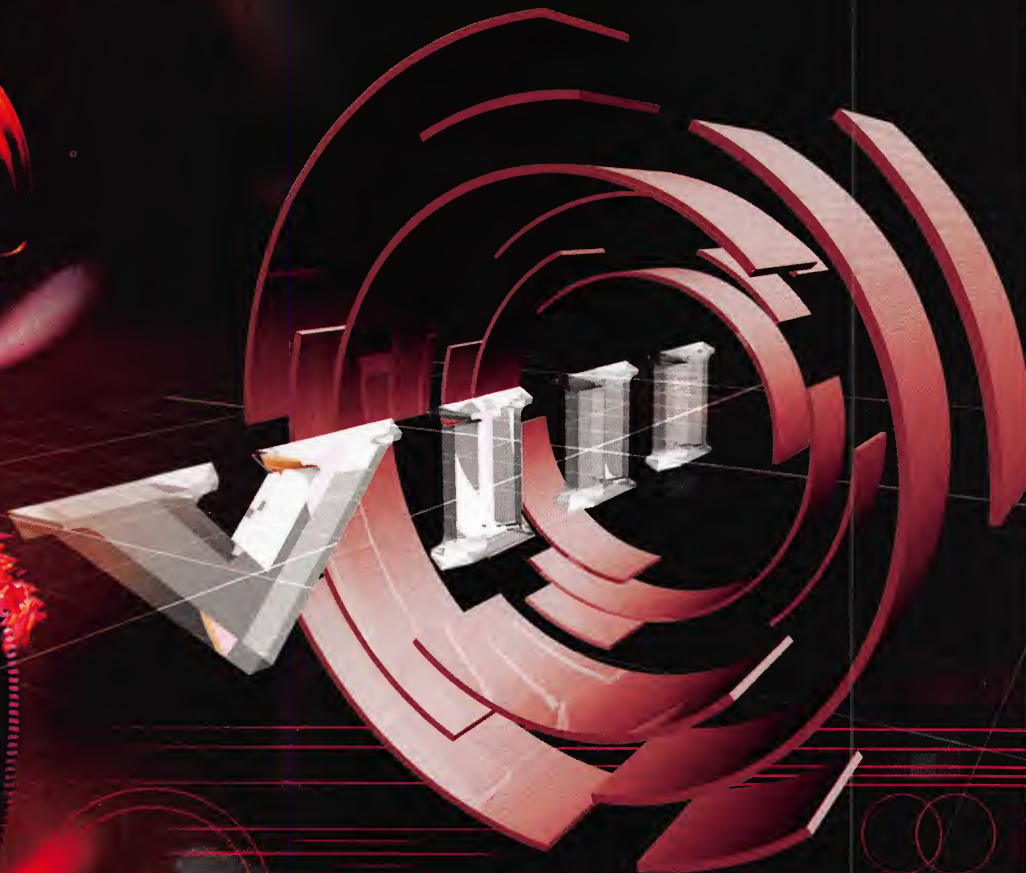


You can run away from the fight, but occasionally your opponent will chase after you.

Keep one opponent pinned to the ground with your foot as you continue to fight another.



Opponents now come armed with a variety of dangerous weapons as well.



FINAL FANTASY VIII

BY RYAN LOCKHART

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Despite a drastic new appearance...
Final Fantasy VIII keeps the feel we expect from this series

● It's strange to look back now and think about how I wasn't really anticipating *Final Fantasy VIII*. Don't get me wrong – I love the series, and always have, ever since that day in front of my NES when the music began playing as I crossed the bridge. But something about *FFVIII* didn't really appeal to me. Perhaps it was my experience with the demo included with *Brave Fencer Musashiden*. Why were the characters so

tall? What was so wrong with MP? Why do the summon monsters have a life gauge? What's with all the pixels? *Final Fantasy VIII* was quite a bit different than what I was expecting, to say the least, and I walked away from that experience feeling pangs of disgust. In fact, I almost waited until the domestic release before purchasing this game. My Lord, was I a fool...

And now, after playing through one of the greatest last dungeons I've ever seen in an RPG, and witnessing an ending too spectacular to express in words, I look back to those days of reticence with a sense of shame. *Final Fantasy VIII* isn't just a great RPG – we should expect that from a game with this heritage – it's literally the greatest *Final Fantasy* to date. Sure, it's easy for me to say that now, so recently after being enamored with the experience, but it's true. Never before have I cared more about a cast of video game characters, nor have I ever been so moved by a game-playing experience. Yes, I loved *Metal Gear Solid* and *Zelda:OoT*, but



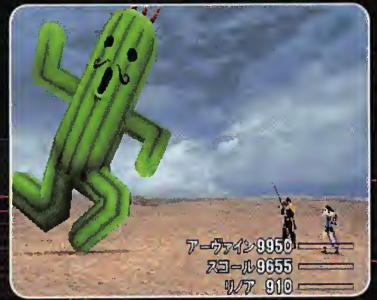


FFVIIIの世界 / 2

- 1 ●
- 2 ○
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Imaginative beasts, dynamic camera angles, and breathtaking spells keep Final Fantasy VIII's many battles fresh.



8 PLAYSTATION

FINAL FANTASY VIII • SQUARESOFT • 1999

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FINAL FANTASY VIII

GND 74LS00 +5v +29

Every aspect of this game screams quality... Square spared no expense in the creation of FFVIII

- those games – despite their “cinematic qualities” – have nothing on *FFVIII* when it comes to sheer jaw-dropping moments. I don't want to ruin anything, but let's just say that a few minutes in total silence, surrounded by a void, can sometimes be eons more powerful than the “flashy” moments we appreciate in other titles.

Of course, it would be foolish of me to expect everyone to have the same experience with *Final Fantasy VIII* as I did, although most I've talked to seem to agree. *Final Fantasy VIII*, at least on the basic level, certainly isn't a perfect RPG. The new systems it incorporates, for example, are great in theory, but have their share of problems in execution. The graphics push the Playstation a bit too far at times, as character models often break up and the world map does some bad things when you're flying around. Even the basic balance – the game seems to start out way too easy and abruptly turns hard near the end – is a bit strange. But, when you compare the few problems this game has with the storyline, overall gameplay and cinematic elements, you'll find that these little nuances are nothing when you view the whole picture.

Instead of rehashing an old engine for a quick buck, Square apparently used the development cycle of *FFVIII* as an opportunity to update everything they felt was getting stale about *FF* – which, by the look of things, was quite a bit. Gone are the small characters and overhead area maps, almost completely replaced by lanky figures and *Resident Evil*-style backgrounds. Incredibly detailed textures take the place of gouraud shading, battles are now full-screen, MP and buying new weapons is a thing of the past, and the spell effects are light-years ahead of anything *Final Fantasy VII* could produce. In fact, the only thing that seems to be nearly unchanged from the former *FF* is the complexity of the storyline, which, at



FFVIII has nearly an hour of spectacular CG footage, including an ending that's over 15 minutes long!



Shall we play a game?

Shall we play a game?



Contrary to the number of mini-games found in *Final Fantasy VII*, Square's latest release has but one – a collectable card game. Yeah, that does sound a bit cheap, but trust me, this mini-game alone is more complex and addicting than anything you'd find in *FFVII*. Hell, I've spent a good eight hours on this game alone, and I know people who've spent quite a bit more time just trying to collect all the cards. Who cares about riding a motorcycle or hunting subs in a cheap vector world when you can whip out your deck and play cards nearly anywhere, with nearly anyone you see!

Sort of like a strange mixture of Uno, MtG, and Othello, the idea is to "flip" your opponent's card to your side by beating its number. Every card has numbers for each side, so as you lay your cards, you have to not only keep your eye on opponent's cards for possible openings, but on your own as well. The game ends when all nine spaces are filled, and the winner (who gets to take at least one of the opponent's cards) is whoever has more cards on his or her side. To keep the game fresh, even after you have handful of powerful cards, new rules (such as Random Hand, Elemental, and Plus, just to name a few) are added as your wins increase.

As an added incentive to play, the cards in your collection can be transformed into items – at least after you learn the ability – and the rarer the card, the rarer the prize. So, if you want the ingredients for the more powerful weapons and potions, you better get practicing!

The Final Fantasy epic starts a new chapter... And continues to impress even the most cynical of fans

times, appears to be even more confusing than the last.

Full of time travel, good ol' amnesia, and more vital characters than any game deserves, *Final Fantasy VIII*'s storyline is a complex tapestry of sorts, one whose apparent outcome changes every few hours of play. While the game's theme might be love, Square shows none of this to you as they slap the back of your head every time you get an idea of what might be going on. One minute Squall might seem to be a normal student at the Balamb Garden military school, and before you know it he's surrounded by furry animals that insist on calling him Laguna, the game's other mysterious "main character." Who built the Gardens, and what is their true purpose? What's with the flashbacks to the kid in the Charlie Brown shirt? Who is the witch Edea, and what is her connection to the students at Balamb Garden? And where does tap dancing come into play when trying to make two characters fall in love?

Once you get over the shock of the new non-height-impaired *Final Fantasy* characters (who, by a stark contradiction to the once-short *FF* folks, are now actually one head taller than humans), you'll quickly appreciate the new level of detail they contain. Square utilized motion capture technology for both the in-game graphics and cinematics, and it truly shows. From the humorous gesture copying that Rinoa uses to make fun of Squall to the

perfect free throw Irvine performs in a ruined basketball court, the populace of *Final Fantasy VIII* start looking less like video game characters and more like people. Their chests move as they breathe, they blink their eyes at random intervals, and the amount of body language these characters (not to mention the enemies you'll face) give off is astounding at times.

Visually, *Final Fantasy VIII* is a whole new ballgame, but changes to the classic *FF* formula only begin there. MP is no more. The Magic Point system, a virtual staple in modern RPGs, has been replaced with a new system, labeled "Draw." In theory this system works amazingly well, allowing you to "steal" a number of magic spells from enemies, which can be used freely until your supply has been exhausted, forcing you to





replenish by drawing from more enemies. Over 20 spells can be acquired this way, and you can store up to 100 of each of them, which is where the problem with this system comes into place. With a bit of patience, you could keep drawing a powerful spell out of an enemy that carries it until you have the maximum number. Unlike the old days, where you'd have to wait until you were powerful enough to cast certain spells, and had to rest to use them again, now you just need to spend a few minutes with a minor enemy to have a nearly everlasting supply. The Guardian Forces, *FFVIII's* answer to summon spells, also have their share of problems. Basically, they are way too convenient to use, and 99 percent of the battles in this game had me calling on them time after time. Why bother mounting an attack on a group of baddies when a simple button press has a raging behemoth striking flaming meteorites at them? Square tried to balance this out a bit by having the GF's lifeforce taking the place of your own as it was being summoned, but often their HP is higher than yours to begin with, making the chance of their death a near impossibility when facing normal enemies.

These new elements are tied together with *Final Fantasy VIII's* new central gameplay feature, the Junction system. Much like *Materia* found in the previous game, this new system allows you to learn new spells and abilities, use items, and summon your GFs. In fact, you have to use this system to do any of that. Before you find your first

GF, all that your characters can do is attack. But once you "junction" yourself with one of these beasts, a whole new slew of commands opens. You can also use this system to combine magic to different attributes, giving you more powerful attacks and defense capabilities.

One of the most important parts of *Final Fantasy*, at least to me personally, is the music. Yet, until now, I felt that Nobuo Uematsu had lost his touch when it came to 32-bit titles. With the exception of Sephiroth's boss theme in *FFVII*, along with a few other selections, I wasn't pleased with its soundtrack at all. While *Final Fantasy VIII's* music unfortunately follows its predecessor in style, there are many more inspired tracks than the last, and the quality of instruments has greatly improved. Edea's theme, the airship tune, and Laguna's battle music, just to name a few, are quite impressive. Even more impressive, though, are the few orchestrated tracks to be found, and the first vocal *Final Fantasy* song, Faye Wong's "Eyes on Me." While I expected to be impressed by the orchestrated selections (and I truly was; hearing the ending themes will be a powerful experience for any *FF* fan), I was less than ecstatic about the vocal track. Once again, I was a fool. Despite the English lyrics, this "love" song was actually quite good, even more so when heard in the ending, with an orchestra in the background and gorgeous CG displayed on the screen; it will impress even the most cynical of *FF* fans.

While a part of me still prefers the old visual style that we expect from Japanese RPGs, and I certainly miss the "cute" SD graphics of past *FFs*, I understand the need for change. With the power of upcoming hardware, we need a segue to the hyper-realistic characters and locations future *FFs* are sure to bring, and that's exactly what *Final Fantasy VIII* does. Square have proven that they can make a great RPG with the *FF* name, no matter what it looks like. And after witnessing the PlayStation 2 demos, it's staggering to think what they will accomplish next. ♪



The rendered locations in *Final Fantasy VIII* are of the highest quality I've ever seen in a video game.

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THQ PREVIEWERS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

THQ have been on a roll of late, and are obviously intent on keeping it that way. From the annals of pro wrestling to burning hot licenses for the kids and exciting new ventures, here's a peek at but a few of their upcoming offerings...

SINISTAR UNLEASHED

Sinistar, a classic 2D '80s arcade shooter, will be making its PC debut this summer as *Sinistar Unleashed*. *Sinistar Unleashed* is as it looks – a breakneck, balls-to-the-wall 3D shooter in which you blast away at all manner of asteroids as you collect crystals to earn weaponry crucial to your advancement. The game features 24 levels of single-player mayhem, eight-player network play and an array of astonishing effects.

This looks absolutely dope to me – I just can't wait to play it!



THQ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS
E3 1999 04991-61774

BREAKNECK



Yet another new PC offering from THQ, *Breakneck* is being touted as the fastest arcade racer available. Aside from sheer speed, players will feast on 24 international tracks racing for trophies and cash. Using corporate funds to maintain your roster of racers, you can

choose from over 30 vehicles, from sports cars to monster trucks. And should a lack of wins put you in arrears with your sponsor, you can always moonlight for some extra cash on the weekends by entering Death Matches and other non-sanctioned events. Sounds like one of the more interesting racers we've come across in quite some time. We'll see how it plays soon.



THQ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS
E3 1999 04991-61774

ROAD RASH

Making its way to a Nintendo console for the first time, *Road Rash*, a down-and-dirty bikefest, and the Nintendo 64 seem like unlikely bedfellows. Something tells me that if there are bathrooms in this version they'll be clean. With the N64 game, THQ are promising new modes (Team Race and Pursuit) as well as female characters (biker babes or chopper hefers, you be the judge) and more weapons than ever before. Let's see, they had bats, chains, and clubs, and beat and kicked each other... I guess there's gonna be some shooting? Need it.



THQ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS
E3 1999 04991-61774

RUGRATS SCAVENGER HUNT



Following the success of *Rugrats* on the PS, *Rugrats 2* (working title) is set to deliver a whole new batch of pint-sized adventures this November for PS and GBC, featuring Tommy, Chuckie, Angelica, Phil and Lil. N-Space are on the job again and they know the material, so you better bring along an extra set of diapers. Pictured here is *Rugrats Scavenger Hunt*, the second interactive board game for the N64 in which the lil' buggers hunt for toys and treasure through all sorts of related mayhem.



THQ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS
E3 1999 04991-61774

SHAOLIN

Shao Lin submerges the player into a traditional Kung Fu movie plot, so while you're playing, all your words will come out one second after you say them. The game is based on real fighting styles, incorporates multiple enemies on screen, and has a four-player simultaneous mode that introduces a unique new set of circumstances to the genre. With over 30 selectable characters and an "innovative" story mode, *Shao Lin* should prove to be an interesting newcomer to the PS fighting landscape.



THQ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS
E3 1999 04991-61774

you if
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Could you **sink** the 3 with 2 seconds left?

would you **work** on your d?

venture into the paint?

seek out the **limelight**?

it's not so easy, **is it?**

GLEN RICE,
CHARLOTTE HORNETS

GAME BOY COLOR



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KONAMI XXL SPORTS SERIES™



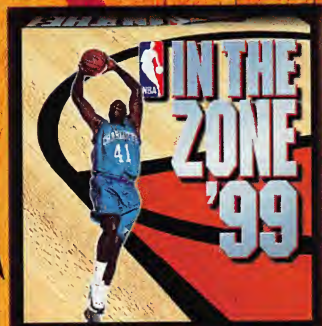
Move like the pros. Swish, dish,
drain it for the 3.



Take it to the point with dunks
that'll rock the rim.



New totally realistic motion-capture
graphics. It's hardwood heaven.



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Disney and Pixar's CG epic is making the transition from Playstation to Nintendo 64... *Can it survive the transformation or will it be all buggy?*

Traveller's Tales are porting *A Bug's Life*, based on the blockbuster Pixar/Disney hit movie and originally designed for the PlayStation, for play on the Nintendo 64. But can they succeed where so many have failed? Traditionally, this is a recipe for disaster, going either way. Games designed for the 64 look poo on the PS, and vice versa. But the lure of a license this size, and minimal costs, as the game is already thoroughly designed, is obviously too much to resist. The question is, will N64 users get as good a game as PS players did? Well, so far – and the game is nearly complete – I'd have to say surprisingly, almost. While this is a game I only consider "good" in the first place (being that I'm over 10), what it lacks in sound on the 64, it makes up for in frame rate. The PS game was plagued with slowdown, and while this version is no stranger to it, it's not nearly as bad. Of course, the textures aren't quite as good, so, hey, do what you gotta do. Like I said, porting PS games to the 64... bad idea. Designed for the young'ns, the game suffers from monotonous gameplay, as you gather berries to throw at bugs, and grow seeds to reach higher ground.



Although there are bosses and the occasional unique play mechanic, the gameplay is simplicity personified for the most part. Flik and his buggies even suggest hints should you stray from the agenda, a testament to its salability. So many games aimed at kids these days are just too hard for them. *A Bug's Life* is meant to be played by, and is perfect for...kids, as it should be. Just like she'll be buying the lunch pail, the video, and the pillow cases, Mom may as well pick up the game while she's at it. ⚡



A BUG'S LIFE

BY DAVE HALVERSON



COMMAND & CONQUER 2 TIBERIAN SUN

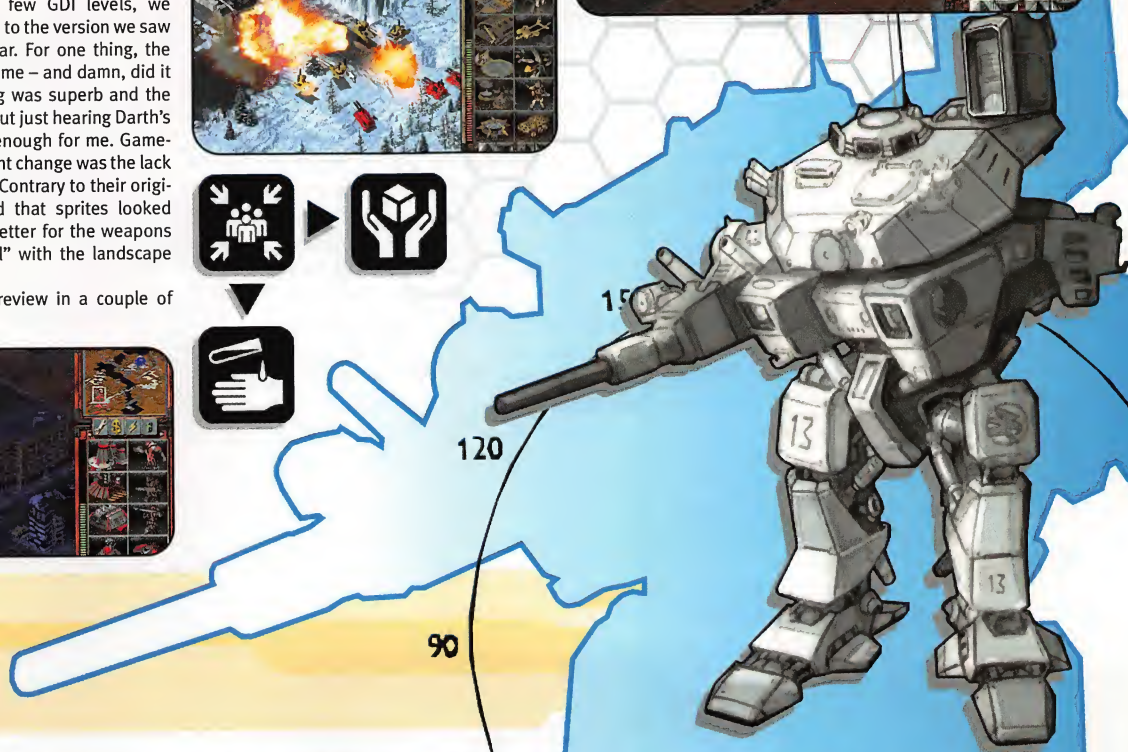
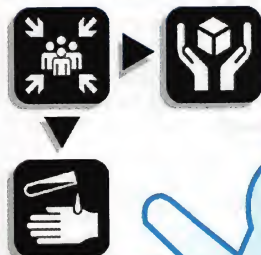
BY RYAN LOCKHART

Thanks to Westwood, this Fourth of July weekend promises to be one not only of hotdogs and hamburgers, family and friends, but of massive armies trudging across barren landscapes. Tanks will be built, suicide runs will be made, and explosions will fill both the sky and computer screen – it will be a weekend of war.

Sure, this isn't the first release date Westwood have mentioned for their incredibly anticipated update to the *Command & Conquer* series, but it seems to be the most realistic. The game levels are almost done, the high-quality movies have been filmed, and all that's really left is massive amounts of tweaking. Westwood recently brought over the latest version of this highly anticipated game to our offices, and from what we saw, they are certainly well on their way to a summer release.

Upon viewing the first few GDI levels, we noticed quite a few updates to the version we saw back in summer of last year. For one thing, the FMV was included in the game – and damn, did it look impressive! The acting was superb and the set design was top-notch, but just hearing Darth's voice again made it good enough for me. Gameplay-wise, the most apparent change was the lack of voxels in some vehicles. Contrary to their original plan, Westwood found that sprites looked cleaner, and would work better for the weapons that wouldn't have to "roll" with the landscape (such as mechs).

We'll hopefully have a review in a couple of months. ☺

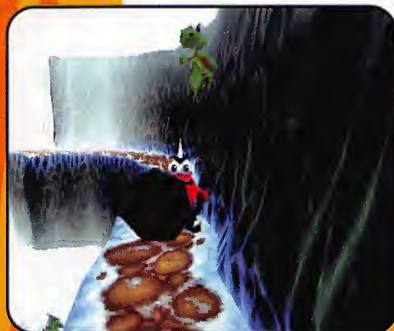


command & conquer 2

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Live-action FMV in PC games. Normally those words together give me an upset stomach, but not when you throw such talent as James Earl Jones and Michael Biehn into the mix.



CROC 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON

*Argonaut's made stars out of a Bee... a Fox...
And now here comes their Croc... again!*

Fox Interactive are going to have a great year. Besides being the proud owners of the best thing to happen to first-person shooters in recent memory, *Alien vs. Predator*, *Croc 2* looks set to give this year's litter of action critters a run for their money. Anyone familiar with *Croc* can attest to Argonaut's remarkable PlayStation engine that displays rich, detailed textures among vast free-roaming landscapes. Set between arena-style levels and caverns, the original *Croc* was a very good game, although there were a few flies in the ointment. The gameplay was somewhat repetitious, many areas were on the small side, and Croc had too wide a turning radius. While everyone (well, almost everyone) knew a franchise was being born, there was definitely room for improvement.

And improve it they have...dramatically. *Croc 2* has infinitely better control and a bet-

ter camera to boot, along with bigger levels, tons of clever interaction and a surprising amount of puzzle elements, similar to what you might find in a pure-bred Nintendo game. Many of the bosses, too, are quite ingenious. Although our preview version was early, devoid of music or any buttoned-up levels, a quick spin around Gobbo Isle told me all I needed to know. The new levels are ingeniously designed and play host to some of the most unique set of circumstance I've seen since *Super Mario 64*; straightforward run and jump *Croc 2* is not. From chases to problem solving to brain twisters, *Croc 2* shows all the signs of a well thought out game, brought to fruition taking the time and resources necessary to churn out a completely memorable 3D adventure. We'll blow the scales off of *Croc 2* in the upcoming review. **f**



As you can see, Argonaut are making the most of the PS's polygonal power.

EVIL ZONE

BY MIKE HOBBS

*Eretzvaju is coming stateside courtesy of Titus...
One-button fighting action for the rest of us!*

If this game looks familiar, it should. We reviewed it favorably last month in World Republic, bearing its Japanese moniker, *Eretzvaju*. Now, Titus has decided to localize this interesting new fighter and bring it stateside under the rather cheesy title of *Evil Zone*. While certainly no one could have expected them to keep the name *Eretzvaju* for this market, *Evil Zone* is a rather horrid and insipid name. Oh well.

Apart from this name change, the game will undergo a complete sonic makeover. New voices will be recorded for the story mode and character attack yells may be redone as well. The music, too, will be completely changed, though it's uncertain what style of music will replace the fruity Japanese fighting tunes (a deal for a soundtrack featuring *The Offspring* fell through). We'll have to wait for the final American version before we can comment on the wisdom of these changes.

Rightly so, Titus will be marketing this game to the more casual user, as its simple gameplay is not meant to satisfy the needs of combo-junky fighting fiends (if you read our review last month, you know that all moves are performed with one button). Still, there's plenty of flash in its cinematic attacks and should impress most gamers.

Expect to see *Evil Zone* on store shelves in mid-April, and a review of the American version next month. Everything already said about the game will still stand, as the gameplay will be untouched. What remains to be seen is whether the aural changes enhance or degrade the experience. If past dub jobs are any indication (*Destrega* springs to mind), the chances are slim that it will be better. -*



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A small sampling of some of the cinematic attacks in *Evil Zone*. Look at those nice clean panties.



▶▶ EVIL ZONE (%)



G-POLICE 2

WEAPONS OF JUSTICE

BY MIKE HOBBS

Psygnosis' ambitious follow-up to *G-Police* is on its way. Due for release this June, this bigger, more accessible sequel looks to improve on just about every aspect of the original, hopefully providing a rewarding play experience for newcomers and fans alike.

The biggest change comes in the way this new game has been opened up. Whereas the first game revolved strictly around controlling advanced hovercopters through dense city environments, *GP2* adds an APC-like armored car, a fast, ED-209-ish mech and a deep-space fighter to the proceedings. No longer stuck in one mode of combat, you will now trundle through cities on the ground and engage in space

dogfighting (though our version lacked any deep-space missions).

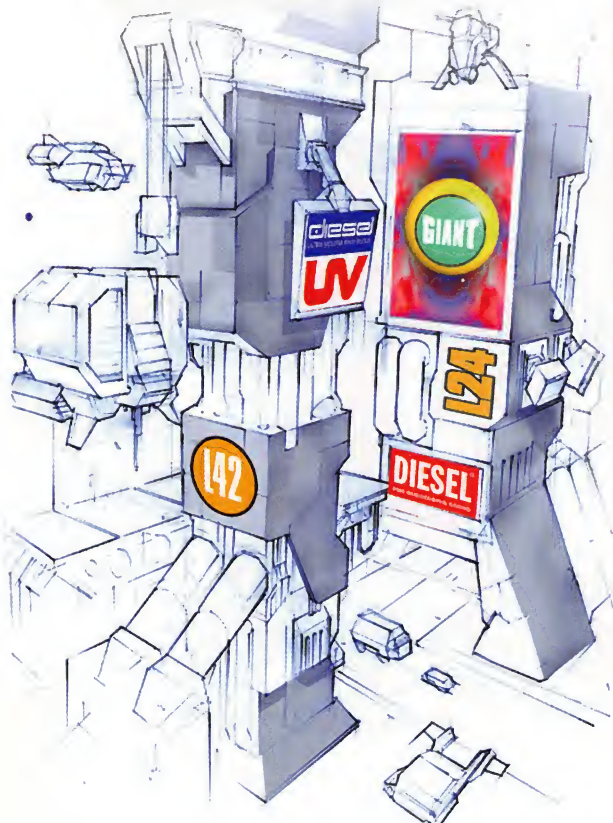
A concerted effort has also been made to make the game more intuitive to play. Control, mission balance, and the presentation of information have all been rendered user-friendly. There's no more wrapping one's head around complex control schemes, and missions have been designed to be more progressive in their difficulty with easier to understand, clear-cut objectives. And the HUD has been simplified, freeing up the player to concentrate on blowing things up.

A big complaint with the original *G-Police* was the limited draw distance afforded by the old engine. The constant draw-in was always yanking you out of the reality. Now, things are a bit better, as distant objects are rendered as wire frames, giving you a slightly enhanced view of the surrounding scenery. This is sadly no substitute for a deep draw distance, and I hope the final version of the game improves on what's present in this early copy. But with the new vehicles, the new engine is, in all fairness, being taxed a bit more heavily. We shall see...

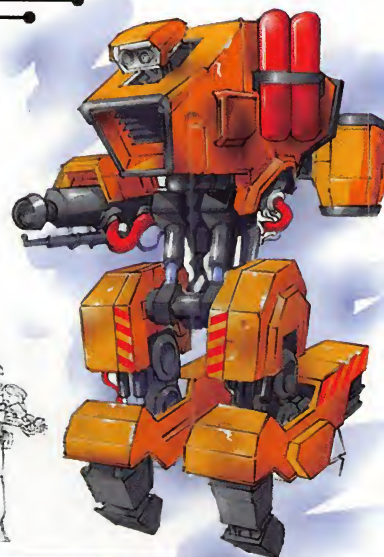
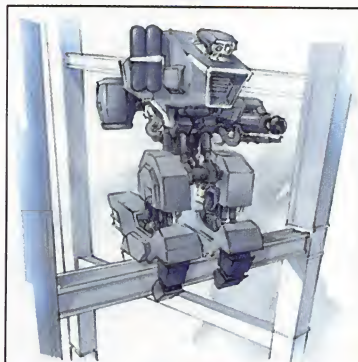
Due for release this June, *G-Police Weapons of Justice* throws a ton of enhancements into the old formula, and the result could turn out to be great. We'll be back with a review in next month's issue. ☛



Not exactly a good spot to be in, but it makes for one heck of a screen shot, hey?



Construction Droid





STAR WARS

EPISODE I: RACER

BY **Bryn Williams**



With all the hype surrounding the *Episode 1* movie, LucasArts have rightly jumped on the bandwagon and have been secretly creating a mass of video games based on the new film. Not only will this guarantee immediate consumer sales, but it also allowed LucasArts to show GR a sneak preview of the N64 *Episode 1* game entitled *Racer*.

Based on a 15-minute sequence from the film in which Anakin Skywalker partakes in a super fast racing championship, *Racer* brings us a small portion of the film and expands vastly on new characters, vehicles and locations that would otherwise have gone to waste (for *Star Wars* enthusiasts, at least).

The races are fought and won in high-speed rocket-powered chariots known as Podracers. Each Podracer has two massive Ion-Engines tethered together by a Magnabeam, towing a small pod which houses the pilot. The player should visualize the machine as a horse-driven chariot, and treat it with the same respect, even though these particular chariots are capable of speeds in excess of 600 mph!

Initial comparisons will be drawn to Psygnosis' *Wipeout64*, and rightly so, as *Racer* borrows heavily from the theme, but at the same time it does all of the above so much better (with the obvious plus being the *Star Wars* license). Hires and low-res versions are standard (ala *Rogue Squadron*) and a solid graphics engine with good frame rates and textures provide *Racer* with a winning presence. Controls have been tweaked and you gain a tremendous feeling of "being there," especially in the first-person-view mode.

With 18 initial characters and as many different Podracers to choose from (and even three hidden ones), young Anakin will have his work cut out for him. Watch out for the unstoppable Sebulba, as this nasty alien uses every underhanded trick in the book to keep him at the top of the league. The force is strong in this one. Thanks to Tom at LucasArts for a nice day. ☺



EPISODE I



MONACO GP2



MONACO GP2

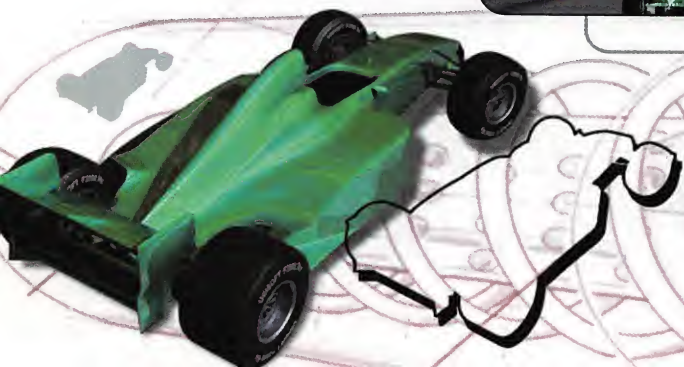
BY MIKE HOBBS

As Sega gear up for the U.S. launch of the Dreamcast (currently rumored to take place in May), quick PC ports, such as the one we have here, may be a key element in the success of Sega's 128-bit console in this country. UbiSoft's *Monaco Grand Prix Racing Simulation 2* proves that not only are ports of accelerated PC games possible and fairly economical, but they can introduce a game to a whole new breed of console-only players. The just-released Japanese edition of *Monaco GP2* forms the basis for this preview, and as very little will change between this version and the subsequent U.S. release, we thought an early look, in lieu of a review in *World Republic*, was warranted.

Perhaps the biggest question looming in everyone's mind is how the Dreamcast version looks in comparison to PC. The answer is virtually identical, with a massive draw distance, both straight ahead and to the sides (even in two-player split screen), and a mostly consistent frame rate. It's ironic that the Monaco course, from which the game borrows its name, has the most frame rate problems, as its dense architecture can send the fps plummeting when many cars are on screen. The PC version dies on this course as well, so that's not such rough going for a first-generation game on a \$200 machine. The car models, however,

suffer no shortcomings, as they are very detailed with specular highlights that add a realistic sheen.

The only thing missing from *Monaco GP2*—and this is true of all versions—is an FIA license for the real teams and drivers. At least 17 real F-1 courses are here, but anyone wanting to step into the shoes of Schumacher or Hakkinen will have to wait for Video System's official F-1 game. *MGP2* is but a mirage of F-1, but for most, that's good enough. »*



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OUTCAST

BY BRADY FIECHTER

When the humanoid creatures are confronted, Slade can either engage in conversation or, if the situation calls for aggressive measures, weapon or hand-to-hand combat can be deployed.



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Cutter Slade finds himself in a whirlwind of combat and adventure on a quest to uncover the mysteries of a parallel universe.

Science fiction has forever been enamored with the idea of parallel universes. What exists in these alternate realities is limited only to the expanses of the imagination,

which leads to either deadening banalities or wonderful fascinations. Part of the appeal of *Outcast*, an ambitious adventure title grounded in its storytelling, is the intriguing vision of its alternate world residing beyond a black hole that is threatening life on Earth.

Cutter Slade, a U.S. soldier sent to study the alien world and repair the damage that has been done in a botched scientific experiment, uncovers a beautiful land spanning six unique regions of surreal, organic construct. By utilizing the rarely used voxel technology for backgrounds, *Outcast's* developers are creating a unique, vivid universe that exudes an almost hand-painted richness and softness of color.

Carrying a backpack loaded with six weapons and survival gear such as a map, compass and x-ray goggles, Slade must explore the massive areas in a completely nonlinear fashion. In fact, no two players will take the same approach when playing *Outcast*, and depending on every situation faced, the game will transpire on an entirely unique course.

When the humanoid creatures are confronted, Slade can either engage in conversation or, if the situation calls for aggressive measures, weapon or hand-to-hand combat can be deployed. Often times these beings reside in communal environments, and if they feel threatened, they will warn others or take immediate action themselves. The artificial intelligence in *Outcast*, working off a proprietary system called GAIA, is intriguing in its concept, allowing the 20 character types to react with uncommon complexity and realism: if Slade harms a tax collector, a farming community may rally in his favor; if he shows a weapon, a timid creature may panic and precipitate confusion, a situation that Slade must figure out how to diffuse; if a creature is aggressive, the game turns into manic action.

Because *Outcast* is story and adventure as much as it is combat, much time is spent in spoken conversation with the inhabitants of this alien world. One of the goals of the *Outcast* team is to foster a superior cinematic experience, delivered through an epic story supported by a dynamic camera, immersing visuals and the already-beautiful original score by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. If the game stumbles upon its final release and fails to address the current problems compromising its bold ideas – the frame rate needs a lot of work – it will be given a second chance at success with a forthcoming Dreamcast version, tentatively slated for release on the system's launch date. ❄



HARVEST MOON 64

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: NATSUME AVAILABLE: FALL '99

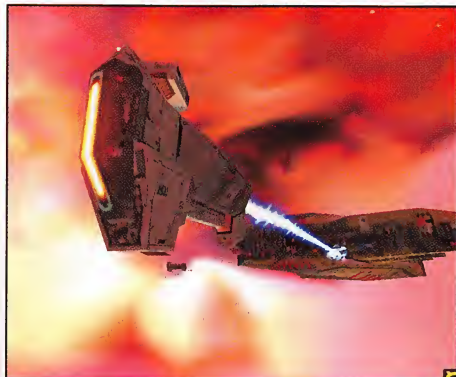
One of Japan's most popular Nintendo franchises is headed our way courtesy of Natsume. First-party Nintendo 64 games aside, *Harvest Moon* is the big thing on the 64 in Japan – and something tells me that it will be here, too. While it may look like a backwoods hick-fest (what with the farmin' and all) it's actually a really cool simulation/rpg.

The game features over 50 characters to interact with, and depending on the outcome, 400 unique situations as a result. Heck, you can fix up your house, get married, race your dogs and horses, get a job and, of course, work the farm! *Harvest Moon 64* is a thoroughly immersive game blending role playing, simulation, and action into a beautifully realized package, enhanced greatly by the 64. We'll have more on *HM64* in future issues. ⚡



HOMEWORLD

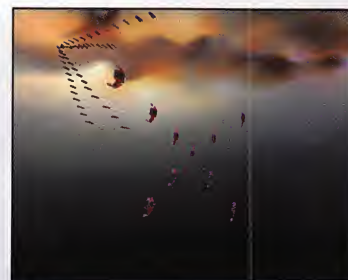
DEVELOPER: RELIC PUBLISHER: SIERRA AVAILABLE: SPRING



Sierra Studios and Vancouver-based Relic Entertainment are about to unleash one of the most anticipated space combat games of all time. Combining elements of RTS and straight action gameplay, *Homeworld* has been generating a buzz ever since last year's E3, where it wowed onlookers with its high resolution graphics and true-3D strategy elements.

Like a lot of good sci fi, *Homeworld's* epic story is informed by countless sources. As the once-powerful but benign lords of a society situated at the center of a Milky Way-like spiral galaxy, you enjoyed peace for millennia. That is, until the conquerors came, and as they are wont to do, invaded your society and committed a virtual genocide. The few remaining survivors were banished to a lifeless rock on the other side of the galaxy. After centuries of a disenfranchised existence, the sole remnant of the once-great society, a crystal, points the way to what may be the forgotten Homeworld. A giant ship is built, and a long journey begins.

This is the setup for the ambitious *Homeworld*, a game that features many RTS hallmarks, but throws them all into a real-time 3D space environment that conceptually, up until now, has yet to be fully explored. With its intuitive interface, commanding units, gathering resources, and researching technologies, it's as easy as a mouse click. And with the game's highly detailed models and infinitely adjustable camera, epic space battles are to be the order of the day. With all the expected multiplayer modes and hardware acceleration support, look for *Homeworld* to make quite a splash when it debuts later this year. We'll be back with lots more coverage soon.



LAURA'S HAPPY ADVENTURES/HYPE: The Time Quest

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: UBISOFT AVAILABLE: NOW



Attention all parental units. If you harbor young children in your domicile, please report to the nearest retail establishment and purchase the correct game for your child, then move over – they'll need the PC for awhile! Three- to seven-year-olds can pound the space bar with *Alex Builds His Farm*, six- to twelve-year-olds will become completely absorbed in *Laura's Happy Adventures*, and for gamers eight and over, there's the full-fledged action/adventure of *Hype the Time Quest*. Why are these kids games so significant? Because they're bona fide Pentium III-ready games, with cutting-edge 3D engines, inspired effects and all the production values you'd find in any big-budget mass-market adventure title. Basically,



Laura's Happy Adventure is to a seven-year-old what *Unreal* or *Tomb Raider* is to the masses. Although on the outside *Laura's Happy Adventure* looks like nothing more than a weeble-ish 3D action game, it's actually been specifically engineered to challenge girls and help develop their social skills. So much for balancing a book on your head! Laura must complete all sorts of tasks, depending on which story she decides to initiate, including Grandfather, Mother, Father, Maid, and Little Brother. I must admit, I played it for a while

during our demo, and it's like a full-on RPG for little kids! I was actually getting into it! Er, I mean, sort of... for the graphics! Up next in the series, (which is based on the popular Playmobile line of kids toys) is *Hype: the Time Quest*. Something tells me that a lot of big kids will be embarking on this adventure. Hats off to Ubi Soft for showing the kids some respect. ⚡



SWORDS & SORCERY

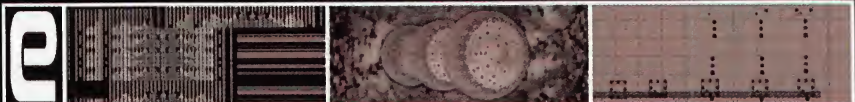
DEVELOPER: HEURISTIC PARK PUBLISHER: WESTWOOD STUDIOS AVAILABLE: SUMMER



While Aaron from Westwood Studios was here showing *Tiberian Sun* (and checking out the latest anime) he whipped out this little slice of magic pie, much to my surprise. The new RPG from acclaimed designer D.W. Bradley's new development house, Heuristic (meaning curious or inquisitive) Park, *Swords and Sorcery* takes traditional elements such as stats, spell casting, and character classes, and weaves them into a deeply immersive first-person engine featuring real-time turn-based battles and parties of up to six characters, from ten races (such as elves, dwarves, felines, elephantine, and monk). The stats, abilities, and inventory from your one-player game can be brought into the multiplayer realm over Westwood online, and the game is totally non-linear.

While there is, of course, a set goal through a deep, immersive story packed with subquests, the way to that goal is in the player's hands. Members of your party can split up and complete different objectives either on their own or together. The engine, though early, looked extremely promising and, as you can see, the character design is looking splendid. We'll have more on *Swords and Sorcery* as the game nears beta form. ⚡





THOUSAND ARMS

DEVELOPER: RED PUBLISHER: ATLUS AVAILABLE: JULY



One of my favorite developers, Red, (makers of *Tempo*, *Super Tempo*, *Sakura Taisen*, and *Bonk's Adventure*) have braided anime and gaming together and produced a superb role-playing adventure for the PlayStation. Stunning and unique, *Thousand Arms* fuses hand-drawn sprites, beautiful polygonal landscapes, and interactive anime cut scenes together with stunning results. What's better is that Atlus have put the game on a pedestal here in the U.S., making it their most ambitious localization yet. All of the recorded voice (and there's over 12 hours of spoken dialogue) will be dubbed in English, and all data transferred, regardless of how many discs it takes. They're even preserving the original Japanese opening and ending songs sung by Ayumi Hamasaki! The game's themes are torn from the pages of the

best Japanese anime and gaming have to offer, weaving a tale of mythology and machines. The PlayStation continues as the safe haven for role-playing fans. It seems there's always an epic to look forward to. The great thing about *Thousand Arms*, though, is that I've never seen anything like it. When you confront a key character on the map (as a cool little hand-drawn flat poly) the camera swings around, and the character re-emerges in the frame in full-screen anime style. There's so much more to tell, but space doesn't allow. I'll journey much deeper into *Thousand Arms* in the June GR.



WARZONE 2100

DEVELOPER: PUMKIN STUDIOS PUBLISHER: EIDOS AVAILABLE: SPRING



The ever-growing RTS genre is about to grow by one more with the imminent release of *Warzone 2100*. Being developed for both PlayStation and PC, it's another attempt at melding real-time strategy and real-time polygonal graphics, and, based on our initial look, could turn out to be quite good.

Warzone 2100 takes place in the apparently inevitable post-apocalyptic period of human evolution. Here, a malfunction in a satellite defense system sends nuclear warheads hurtling towards Washington D.C., Moscow, and Beijing. Naturally, a nuclear holocaust ensues, and those

not killed by the fallout and blast die from plagues. Nice. About a million people survive this collapse and splinter into hundreds of scavenger groups, each bent on rebuilding the world in its own twisted image.

Starting out with simple resources, you will attempt to spearhead your new world order. With typical RTS staples such as factories, command centers, and power generators, you amass a fighting force with which to protect your base and conquer others. By researching new technologies, you are able to build hundreds of varieties of vehicles, from VTOLs and light attack craft, to heavily armed tanks and hovercraft. This customization is one of the best features thus far.

We'll be bringing you more on *Warzone 2100* soon. =><=





KARATE

KENPO

KICKBOXING

KUNG-FU

K-1

REVENGE

K-1 REVENGE combines all forms of **MARTIAL ARTS** in a raucous type of fighting simulation that combines the special moves and combos of the best fighting games with the gritty realism only possible when the action is based on the true life capabilities of **ACTUAL K-1 FIGHTERS.**

The "K" of K-1 refers to the main disciplines that are represented in K-1: Karate, Kickboxing, Kung-Fu & Kenpo. The "1" represents the fact that this is an open weight-class fighting sport and also the champion is truly #1, the best.



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This month we've been deluged with a pocket-sized cornucopia of promised games...and we're holding back a bunch until they get closer to their final form! But these three, looming close on the horizon, have us in such a state of anticipation that we couldn't wait for the finals... so here's some pre-views to tide you over until they come out next month!



SUPER MARIO BROS. DELUXE

NINTENDO
MAY 10, '99

Fourteen years ago, Nintendo launched their classic 8-bit platform game *Super Mario Bros.* on the NES, which laid the foundation for this entire genre of side-scrolling jumping, swimming, and smashing games. Well, Nintendo's porting the classic code over to the Game Boy Color, and the conversion is perfect (except for the size of the screen, of course). All the levels, monsters, secrets, and power-ups are slated to be in this version, and although there has been no word on any new areas or bonus items (presumably there won't be any), just having this classic game available to play at any time will be bonus enough. Jump, Mario, jump!



CONKER'S POCKET TALES

RARE/NINTENDO
APRIL 26, '99

After his introduction in *Diddy Kong Racing*, Conker the squirrel is ready for the spotlight in Rare's *Conker's Pocket Tales*. Although this *Zelda*-style action/RPG game will run on the original black & white Game Boy, you've gotta go with the GBC—just look at these colors! Rare promises over 20 hours of adventuring as Conker tries to rescue Berri the chipmunk and recover his stolen birthday presents, with many quests and subgames to complete in order to reach the end, and three memory spaces for saving your progress. And, Rare

promises, this is just an appetizer for Conker's next adventure: *Twelve Tales: Conker 64* for Nintendo 64, due this Christmas!



GAME BOY COLOR OUTPOST

BY EDD FEAR

DUKE NUKEM GBC

GT INTERACTIVE
APRIL '99

Let's see...I've played Duke Nukem games on my PC, my Mac, my Playstation, and my N64...what's left? Aha! GT Interactive fills the void (was there one!?) by bringing our harsh-spoken hero to the GBC, and in the process he loses the 3-D look we're all used to, as well as the comments that made him so popular. This doesn't spell a poor game, however; *Super Mario Bros* proved years ago that side-scrolling action can be addictive fun. And if I can destroy stuff with Duke's classic big guns, anytime, anywhere, in true Game Boy style... hmmm, I think I see where GT is going with this! A good play-test will say for sure, but I, for one, am looking forward to the carnage. I'll even supply my own snappy voiceovers: "Now that's what I call cocked and loaded!"



GAME BOY COLOR COLORS!

Also coming out on May 10, Nintendo's purple (a.k.a. Grape, just above) and clear purple (a.k.a. Atomic Purple, further above) Game Boy Color machines will be joined by Berry, Lime,

Dandelion, and Teal colored units, representing the full range of colors in the GBC logo. Get 'em all... I know I plan to!



GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS

page 59

reviews intro

A *Aliens vs. Predator* stands atop this month's quiver of games with 3 intense modes, excellent 1-player and network play, and stunning visuals... Crystal's latest *Gecko* escapade fared fairly well... and *Ridge Racer* is riding high! Ooh, doesn't look like *Fighting Force* had too many fans, though....



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR	B+	B+	B+
FIGHTING FORCE 64	D+	C-	D
GEX 3	B	B+	B+
LODE RUNNER 3-D	B-	C	C+
RECDIL	B	B+	B
RIDGE RACER T4	A-	B+	A-
ROLLCAGE	B		
RUSHDOWN	D+	C-	C
SHADOW MADNESS	C+		
STREET SK8R	B		

IMPORT REVIEWS

AERO DANCING	B-		
ARMORED CORE: MOA	C+		
DEEP FREEZE	C		
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS COLLECTION	B		
POWER STONE	B+	B+	B+
PSYCHIC FORCE 2012	B+	B+	B-
Puyo PUYO	B+		
SENGOKU TURB	C-		
TRICKY SLIDERS	C-		

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEW SYSTEM

- (A+)** Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature the highest quality visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. *Example: Silent Hill*
- (A)** Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or any number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. *Example: Ridge Racer T4*
- (A-)**
- (B+)**
- (B)** Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems plus a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. *Example: Lode Runner 3D*
- (B-)**
- (C+)**
- (C)** Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: Sengoku Turb*
- (C-)**
- (D+)**
- (D)** Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Turok 2 GBC*
- (D-)**
- (F)**

1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.

2. Games marked in **YELLOW** should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned.]



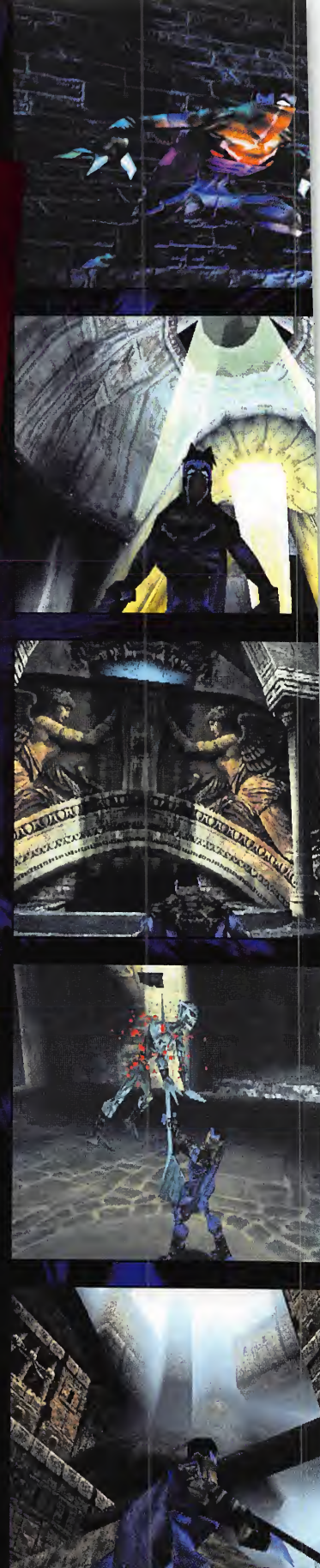
Soul Food...



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SOUL REAVER
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MARINES

race..Human



THESE TOUGH HOMBRES HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO SOME OF THE MOST INTENSIVE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL COMBAT TRAINING IN THE HISTORY OF THE EARTH COLONIES. THE MARINE CORPS IS EXTREMELY DEMANDING AND ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF SOLDIERS MAKE IT THROUGH TO GRADUATION. THE VERY BEST HUMANITY HAS TO OFFER IN ALL FORMS OF COMBAT AND WARFARE.



weapons

- ▶ PULSE RIFLE W/60MM GRENADE LAUNCHER
- ▶ SMART GUN FEATURING LASER TRACKING AND PIVOTAL HARNESS

- ▶ FLAME THROWER INCENDIARY UNIT
- ▶ M83A2 SADAR ROCKET LAUNCHER



items

- ▶ ARMORED VEST
- ▶ MEDIPACK (RESTORES HEALTH)

- ▶ MOTION TRACKER (TRACKS LIVING ENTITIES WITHIN 25 METERS)
- ▶ JETPACK



strengths

- ▶ WIDE ARSENAL OF POWERFUL WEAPONS
- ▶ COMMUNICATES WITH OTHER MARINES



weaknesses

- ▶ THE HUMAN FACTOR
- ▶ SUSCEPTIBLE TO DAMAGE FROM HEIGHTS
- ▶ REASONABLE MOVEMENT SPEEDS

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

There's no killin' what can't be killed...

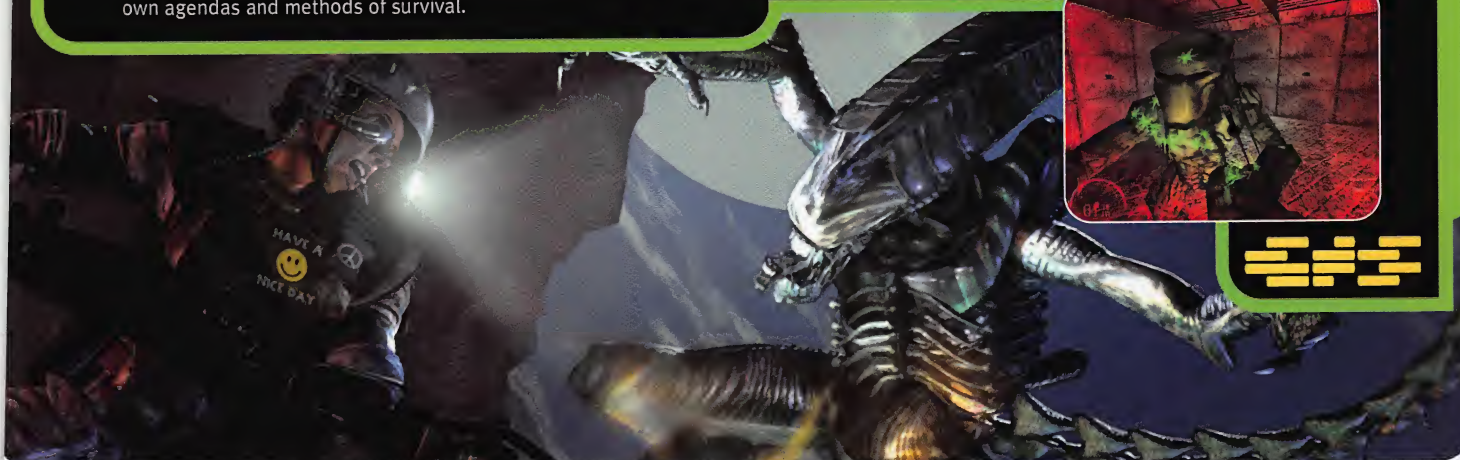
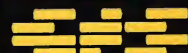
BY MIKE GRIFFIN

Three ultimate warriors get down in Rebellion's stunning FPS for PC!

Rebellion and Fox Interactive have now been working on AVP for what seems to be an eternity. The time scale, however, is completely irrelevant, and I think the reason for this is that with such an amazing license, the whole FPS gaming community has simply just wanted to get their hands on this prestigious title.

Ever since last year's E3, when we were treated to some awesome alien-based sequences, PC authorities have been making rumblings about AVP being a possible *Quake*-killer. Well, at last the time has arrived to make a decision and I can quite happily report that AVP is indeed an incredible game.

The very fact that you can relive those incredible moments from the Hollywood classics is reason enough to be jubilant about AVP, but there is so much more than nostalgia attached to this theme. The game allows you to select either an Alien, Predator or a Colonial Marine, all of whom have their own agendas and methods of survival.



Alien

race..Alien



THESE BIO-MECHANICAL DEMONS HAVE A SOCIAL STRUCTURE SIMILAR TO MOST OF THE INSECT KINGDOM. THE QUEEN LAYS THE EGGS. THE EGGS PRODUCE FACE-HUGGING PARASITES. THE FACE-HUGGERS IMPREGNATE A HOST. THE HOST'S CHEST BURSTS OPEN AND RELEASES AN ADOLESCENT WORKER. THE WORKER BUILDS THE HIVE. THE HIVE HOUSES THE WARRIORS AND THE QUEEN. REPEAT UNTIL EXTINCTION. SUPER-HUMAN STRENGTH AND SPEED MAKE THESE THE MOST ULTIMATE MINDLESS KILLERS IN THE GALAXY.

weapons

- ▶ RAZOR-SHARP CLAWS
- ▶ BONEY PREHENSILE TAIL
- ▶ TWO MOUTHS (ONE EXTENDIBLE TO 8 FEET)



items

- ▶ CHITINOUS ARMOR PLATING
- ▶ NIGHT VISION



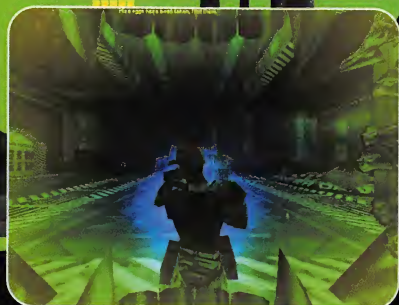
strengths

- ▶ ABILITY TO CLIMB ALL SURFACES
- ▶ HIGHER INTELLIGENCE
- ▶ LINKED TO THE HIVE MIND



weaknesses

- ▶ ZERO LONG-RANGE ATTACK
- ▶ SUSCEPTIBLE TO GUN FIRE



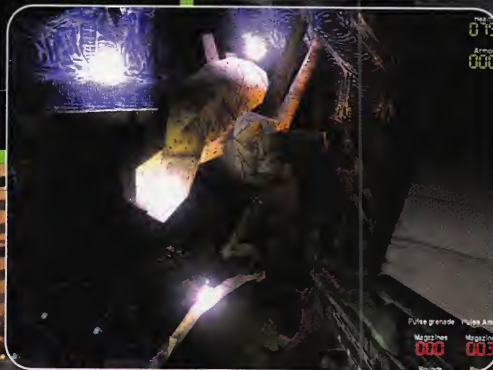
You are thrown into an FPS environment and given a briefing from your commander, hunting committee or hive mind. Then it is a simple task of completing the objectives while surviving the horrors that await you in each scenario. For example, a fellow Predator has been captured by a band of marines on an outpost, and you must infiltrate the base and rescue your companion without being killed.

Each of the characters has different attributes, which are enough to make them wholly different but, at the same time, equal and well-balanced. The Marine must rely on Pulse Rifles, Flares and Motion Trackers to survive, while the Alien (who can cling and run on all surfaces) must utilize its wide field of vision and claw/tail attacks (not to mention eating humans' brains). The Predator is the most sophisticated character and begins each level with all his signature weapons (Spear Gun, Neuro-Pistol, Cloak, and Disc, etc.),

but he has a limited amount of power for operation of these items. The balance between characters is great and you gain a great sense of kinship with the different breeds as you become familiar with them.

There are five normal missions (and six bonus stages) for each character in single-player mode, where it should be stated that *AVP* really excels. Multiplayer has some neat modes, including Predator Tag, where one Predator must take out as many Marine human players before getting killed as possible. The Marine that delivers the killing blow then becomes the Predator, and so on. The guy with the highest number of Marine kills wins. Very cool. Generally the multiplayer is great fun, but not in the same league as the mighty *Quake II*. This isn't really a concern, as *AVP* is best enjoyed alone, while in a dark room soaking up the intense atmosphere.

Fans of the films will immediately shriek with delight as locations such as LV4-26, egg-filled laboratories, APC's, Giger-esque bio-mechanical structures and monuments all



predator

race..Reptilian Alien



THE ULTIMATE HUNTERS IN THE GALAXY, THIS UNKNOWN RACE TAKE THEIR SPORT VERY SERIOUSLY AND WILL QUITE HAPPILY COMMIT SUICIDE IF CORNERED, THREATENED OR CLOSE TO DEATH. THEY HUNT ALL LIVING SPECIES AND COLLECT SKULLS FOR THEIR TWISTED TROPHY DISPLAY CABINETS. ABLE TO TRAVEL ACROSS INTERSTELLAR SPACE, THEY TRAVEL SILENTLY IN ADVANCED SPACECRAFT. INSANELY STRONG AND UNRELENTING, THEY WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO KILL THEIR QUARRY.



weapons

- ▶ RETRACTABLE WRIST BLADE
- ▶ SMART DISC
- ▶ SPEAR GUN
- ▶ NEURO-PISTOL
- ▶ SHOULDER-MOUNTED PLASMACASTER



items

- ▶ CLOAKING ARMOR
- ▶ LASER TARGETING
- ▶ INFRARED VISION
- ▶ FULL SPECTRAL VISION
- ▶ MEDICOMP



strengths

- ▶ INCREDIBLE STEALTH SKILLS
- ▶ IMMENSE PHYSICAL PAIN THRESHOLD



weaknesses

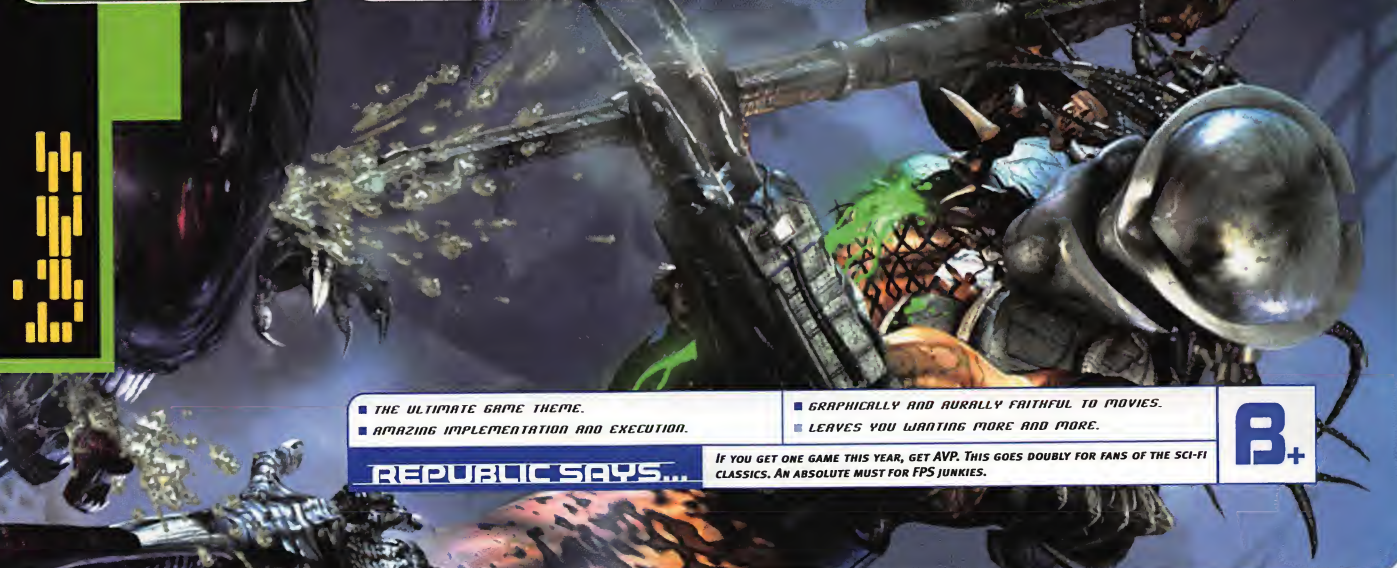
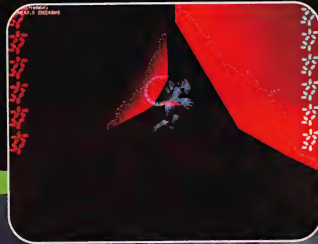
- ▶ SLOW TO MANEUVER
- ▶ LIMITED SUPPLY OF POWER FOR ALL ITEMS



faithfully re-create the best moments from the films. Yes, the Marine goes toe-to-toe with the Alien Queen in a truly nerve-wracking sequence. And yes, if you sneak up on a Marine, the Aliens can bite their heads off and eat the contents (powering up the creature's health). And yes, if you critically injury a Predator (not easy) he doubles up and sets his forearm-mounted comm station to self-destruct. All these touches make the whole gaming experience a complete marvel to behold.

Graphically, the engine is fantastic, and never really succumbs to lag or texture break-up, with everything bobbing along at a frantic pace. Sound effects are verbatim from the movies (the Smart Gun's FX are enough to send shivers down the spines of even the hardest-nailed hombres) and all music is suitably eerie and dread-inducing.

Combine all the small details and the whole is certainly greater than the sum of the parts. Rebellion has performed a sterling job with *AVP*, and they should be heartily congratulated for successfully achieving a great binary incarnation of this mighty legacy. *AVP* is one of the finest PC titles released over the last few years and should not be missed at any price. Ripley and the lads would be proud.



■ THE ULTIMATE GAME THEME.
■ AMAZING IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION.

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■ LEAVES YOU WANTING MORE AND MORE.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

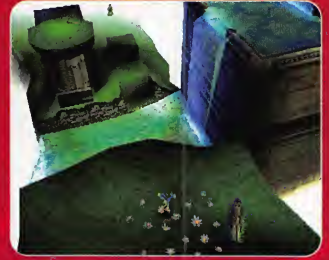
IF YOU GET ONE GAME THIS YEAR, GET *AVP*. THIS GOES DOUBLY FOR FANS OF THE SCI-FI CLASSICS. AN ABSOLUTE MUST FOR FPS JUNKIES.

B+



GEX 3 DEEP COVER GECKO

BY DAVE HALVERSON



Although Gex is a lizard, he seems obsessed with getting tail... Defeat Rez and he just might... She looks worried.





Gettin' a little tail has never been so much fun! Lead the little leezard into the lovin' caress of agent Xtra!

In the wake of such gems as *Banjo & Kazooie*, *Medievil* and *Tonic Trouble*, the free-roaming action genre has become one that is at once brimming with quality and susceptible to an eminent lack of innovation. Before we usher in the next generation of 3D, game designers will have to work extra hard to find a way to make the current crop outshine the gems of PS and N64 past. In the case of *Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko*, Crystal Dynamics have adopted a number of unique features to set their first 3D *Gex* sequel apart from the pack. To begin with, Gex is in constant contact via FMV with the babe-aliscous Agent Xtra, (played convincingly by Baywatch's Mariece Andrada) who he's out to rescue from the wrenching grip of the latest incarnation of Rez. But if he's to nuzzle within her cleavage of infinite depth, there's a whole lotta game to conquer beforehand.

The all-new and much-improved media dimension has taken on a grand scale with a *Banjo*-size overworld and some ingenious new level structure. Adopting a more diverse format, you'll find less of the close quarters found in *Enter the Gecko* and more wide open levels littered with intense platforming elements and level-specific play mechanics. The basic *Gex* blueprint has remained the same, with four remotes to be had

in each theme-based area, with a certain number required to open up additional areas on the map. This, of course, means redoing each level three to four times (albeit for different reasons), which I'm not always wild about. By the fourth pass I sometimes found myself rushing, anxious to put the area (and Dana Gould's level-specific witticisms) behind me. Dana has some great lines in *G3*, but he utters some of them way too often in certain levels. Personally, I would rather traverse one vast area in which all four remotes could be collected in one very long, constantly evolving sweep, with the voice down or off. It's my lone complaint, though, so let's move on.

The levels themselves in *Gex 3* are, in my opinion, the star attraction. So often designers simplify rather than intensify the platform elements essential to the success of games such as this. Crystal haven't "dumbed-it-up" at all; in fact, there are genuinely hard jumps in *Gex 3*. And while you rarely fall to your death, do-overs abound, as they should, so respect to that. The massive pirate ship of Cut Throat Cove is a beautifully detailed polygonal structure, and the towering beanstalk in Fairy Tale provides a truly inspired vertical romp littered with perilous platforming.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 120



Gex gets mashed into the canvas by Steve Austin's polygonal evil twin, proving that wrestling's not fixed!



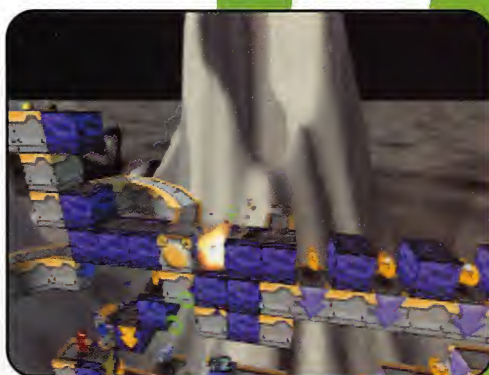
■ LOTS OF GREAT PLATFORMING ANTICS
■ VAST LEVELS THAT STRETCH IN EVERY DIRECTION

■ REPLAYING CERTAIN LEVELS CAN BE A DRAG
■ ENEMY AI COULD BE BETTER

REPUBLIC SAYS...

GEX 3 DELIVERS MORE OF EVERYTHING YOU LIKED ABOUT 2, ALONG WITH ADDITIONAL PLAY MECHANICS AND BETTER DIVERSITY, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM AS POLISHED.





Running around massive 3D environments showered in flashes of explosions while blasting baddies is always a good time, but a game like *Lode Runner 3-D* serves as a welcome alternative when you feel like dropping your thought processes out of the common video-game holding pattern. Here is the thinking man's game, and for those who still want their reflexes tapped, there are more than enough moments to kick in that fast-twitch corner of your mind.

Set against the backdrops of five distinct planets harboring unique sets of obstacles and traps, the game has you mining gold scattered throughout maze-like sections of blocks. These blocks are primarily removed from your path by blasting diagonally in front of you with a mining laser or by dropping a bomb that sets off chain reactions. As sections of the stage are destroyed, they will slowly regenerate, which, coupled with aggressive monks floating around the mazes, adds a sense of urgency and mounting difficulty to the game. And while there is a base strategy that must be formed to clear an area, every planet presents a new dilemma to manipulate your thinking: shoot an ice block and a chain reaction quickly removes entire regions; activate a drill, and a path will be cleared, requiring an entirely new sequence of timing.

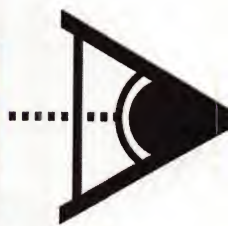
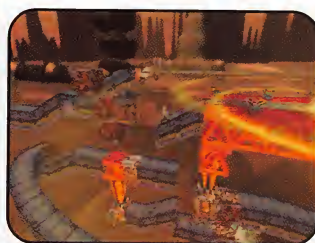
Lode Runner 3-D is not always easy on the eyes, but try to forget about the contemptible blur, the stagnant effects, the bland colors, the stuttering frame rate; it's all about great action-puzzle gameplay, and what you do eclipses what you see. As challenging as it is addictive,

Lode Runner 3-D is the atypical Nintendo 64 title with an appeal for both the puzzle fans and any gamer searching for a little change in their software lineup. ✨



LODE RUNNER 3-D

BY BRADY FIECHTER



■ NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT ON N64

■ HAZARDS AND INVENTIVE PUZZLES ENTERTAINING MIX

■ EACH WORLD HAS YOU RETHINKING YOUR STRATEGY

■ DULL GRAPHICS UNDERMINE THE ENJOYMENT

REPUBLIC SAYS...

LODE RUNNER 3D IS NOT YOUR TYPICAL PUZZLE GAME - OR YOUR TYPICAL N64 TITLE, FOR THAT MATTER. CHALLENGING AND ADDICTING, THE GAME EXCELS IN ITS ORIGINALITY.

B-

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RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

BY MIKE HOBBS



R4's dynamic lighting can clearly be seen in these three uniquely lit shots. From dark to light, R4 does it all.

When Namco set out to do something, they do it right. Witness their latest creation, *Ridge Racer Type 4*. In addition to creating a brilliant new racing controller, Namco have also thrown into the mix absolutely hardware-busting graphics and their unwavering commitment to exciting gameplay and attention to detail. Certainly, this is the most ambitious *Ridge Racer* game yet and the only title to come close to challenging *Gran Turismo* – though in fairness to the almighty GT, *R4* is less deep and more arcade-like.

To begin, let's talk about the new controller. Called the JogCon, this wonder of affordable force-feedback technology is more intuitive and better made than Namco's previous experiment, the NegCon, and offers up pin-point control, enhancing *Ridge Racer Type 4* immensely. The large, centrally mounted wheel can be manipulated by two thumbs or grasped by one set of fingers and has the power to move left or right on its own, simulating the gentle kisses of other cars and the very resistance of steering through a tight bend. *R4* plays great with a standard analog, digital and NegCon pad, but when played with the JogCon, the game truly becomes something special.

Perhaps the biggest departure from previous *Ridge Racer* titles is the inclusion of more than one course with variations. Here, you get four unique locales with one to three variations for a total of eight unique raceways. You'll race through each in the Grand Prix mode, split up into three heats, earning four different cars along the way. Each car you earn is faster than the last,



NAMCO ACTIVE FORCE CONTROLLER
JOGCON™
ジョグコン

R4

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4



責任者
1 Sophie Chevalier - MMM [France]
Bonjour. Welcome to Team Mappy. I'm Sophie Chevalier. I'm the owner of the Micro Mouse Mappy Team. Are you surprised?



Enki Gilbert - RTS [Italy]
To accept all that lies ahead and to achieve victory: that is the way of RTS. We're expected to win this GP as a matter of course.

責任者
3



Shinji Yazaki - PRC [Japan]
I'm Shinji Yazaki, the manager of this team. I can't believe these bozos at the top, sending me an inexperienced rookie like you.

責任者
2

責任者
4

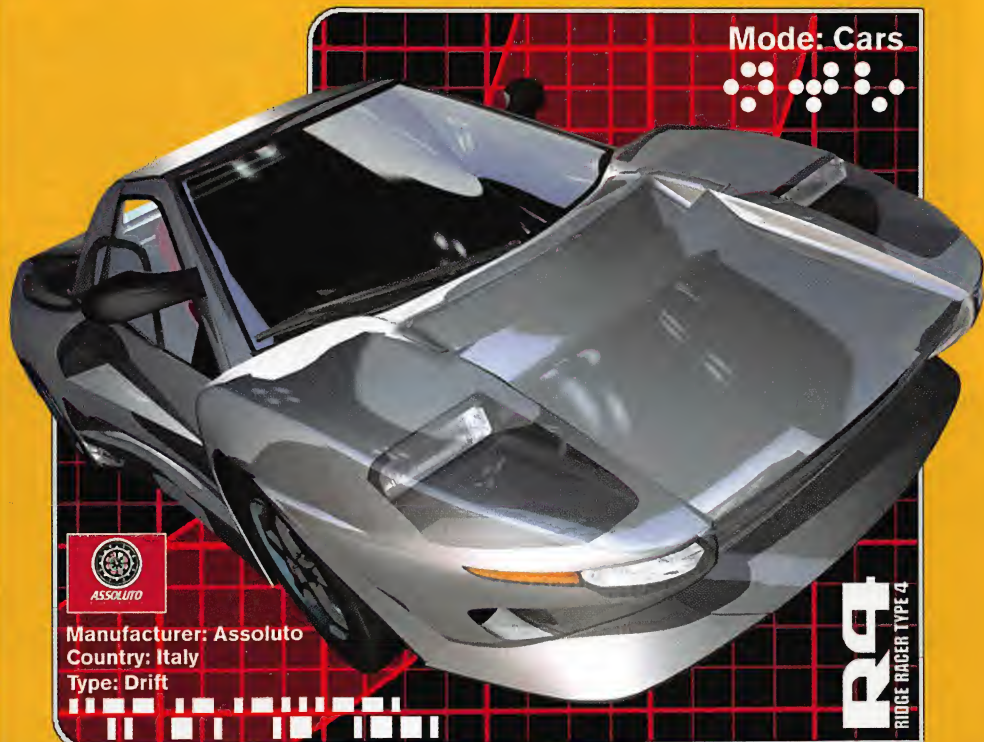
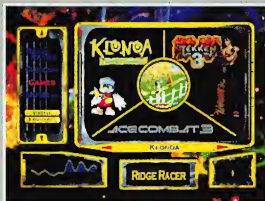
Robert Chrisman - DRT [USA]
Our team's performance has been less than stellar in recent years. Let's turn things around and give it our all. You can do it.



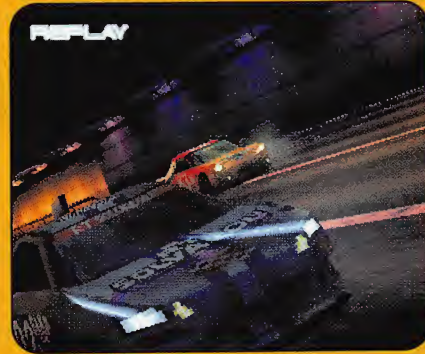


BONUS DISC

The *R4* Bonus Disc has gone through a few interface and content changes over the Japanese version, but the 60-fps Ridge Racer is still on hand. You'll also find playable demos of *Klonoa* and *Tekken 3*, along with a video of *Ace Combat 3*. There's even a little history on the Ridge Racer series and a slide show of Namco's Museum offerings.



Manufacturer: Assoluto
Country: Italy
Type: Drift



321 cars, eight courses, and mind-blowing graphics The biggest, most exciting Ridge Racer yet!

so that by the time you reach the last four races, you're absolutely flying. Another surprise is that there are a whopping 321 cars that can be opened up in *R4*. While it's practically impossible to earn each and every one (trading cars via the forthcoming PocketStation is your best bet), you can nonetheless open up a huge variety through the innovative Team/Maker concept. The four teams run the gamut from easy to expert tuning and each of the four car manufacturers represent different body styles and either grip or drift style handling. By combining different teams and makers, you gain access to a big portion of the cars in the game.

Always evident throughout the *Ridge Racer* series has been Namco's supreme skill in designing courses that are not only beautiful, but also thrilling to race on, and *R4* continues this tradition with style. Trackside detail is incredible, whether you're sweeping around corners through a city or flicking your car through S-bends in the countryside. You can see seemingly forever, and there are frighteningly realistic lighting effects everywhere. From an amber dusk to a chilly blue dawn, the atmosphere created by *R4*'s ambient lighting is second to none and awe-inspiring.

Above and beyond all of this, you get a great two-player split-screen (which will accommodate four players with a serial link), a car decal editor, a challenging one-on-one trial, stunning replays, and, of course, fantastic Namco music. What else can I say? Buy this game! =>

- BETTER GRAPHICS COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED ON PS
- JOGCON IS A WONDER OF A CONTROLLER

- REWARDING PIN-POINT CONTROL
- 321 CARS CAN BE OPENED UP

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THIS GAME IS A MUST-PURCHASE AS IT STANDS AS THE BIGGEST RIDGE RACER YET AND THE ONLY DRIVING GAME TO GIVE GRAN TURISMO SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT.



Crave's auspicious role-playing epic is upon us...
It's a man-sized quest for sure... but the competition is a legend

SHADOW MADNESS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

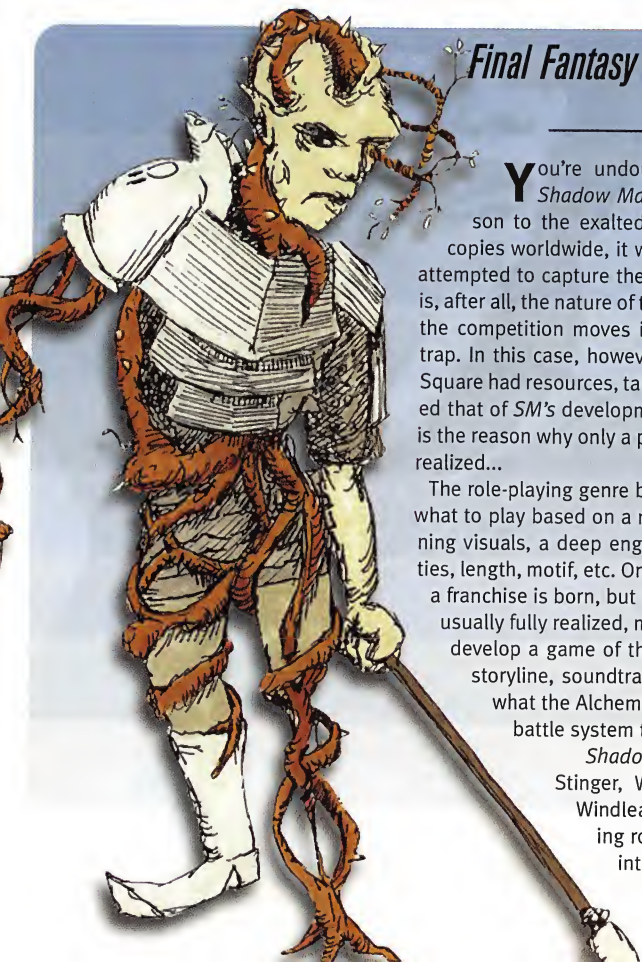


*Final Fantasy VII American style? We know the formula works...
But can the magic be duplicated?*

You're undoubtedly looking at the graphic style of *Shadow Madness* and drawing the obvious comparison to the exalted *FFVII*. With that title selling millions of copies worldwide, it was only a matter of time before someone attempted to capture the magic (and the money) that *FFVII* did. It is, after all, the nature of the business: benchmarks are set and then the competition moves in and attempts to build a better mouse trap. In this case, however, Crave have taken on a daunting task. Square had resources, talent, and a budget that I'm sure far exceeded that of *SM*'s development team. Perhaps the knowledge of this is the reason why only a portion of *Shadow Madness* has been fully realized...

The role-playing genre being so wide-spread, RPG players choose what to play based on a number of elements; strategic battles, stunning visuals, a deep engrossing story and soundtrack, multi-player capabilities, length, motif, etc. Once in a long while, all of these elements conspire and a franchise is born, but for the most part, only a few of these ingredients are usually fully realized, mainly because of the time and money that it takes to develop a game of this size and scope. If your role-playing priorities are storyline, soundtrack, and length, well, *Shadow Madness* may be just what the Alchemist ordered. If you're looking for great graphics and a battle system to match, however...well, keep looking.

Shadow Madness revolves around three unlikely allies: Stinger, Windleaf, and Harv-5. Stinger's your troubled teen, Windleaf your foxy, earthy wildergirl, and Harv-5 is a highly intelligent and very special farming robot. The story cleverly begins at the 5-6 hour mark of the game, and quickly segues into a flashback detailing the events that lead up to that point. Each of our group's fam-





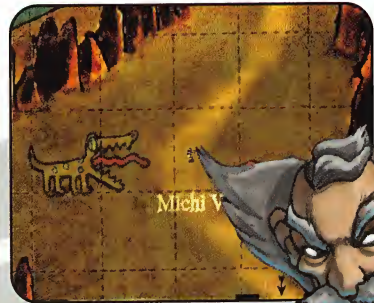
Join Stinger, Windleaf, Harv-5... and friends! And trek across a massive alien continent!

illies and homes have been wiped from the face of the planet, and they must come together first to alert unaffected regions and get help, and ultimately to rid the world of a heinous evil (who could be their god) once and for all. In preparing to write this review, my notes on the story alone could have filled three pages of solid text. In the interest of space, let me just say that it is a wonderful and highly creative tale, skillfully written and wholly engulging. In fact, if the visuals and battles were there to match, I would be downright celebrating *Shadow Madness* – which actually makes me all the more disappointed with the overall package. Being that the backgrounds are pre-rendered, one would think that the polygonal characters and enemies would be painstakingly crafted models in the tradition of Cloud, Tifa, Barret etc. But they are poorly modeled, bejeweled with separated limbs and clipping. Some of the enemies look so bad in fact, that I nearly stopped playing, succumbing to the notion that things were only going to worsen as the latter parts of the game unfolded.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 120



THIS FIRST-PERSON SUB SHOOTER KICKS OFF THE SECOND DISC.



SHADOW MADNESS-CRAVE ENT.



- EXCELLENT, FULLY REALIZED STORY GRABS YOU... BUT THE IFY POLYGONAL MODELS MAKE IT A RUFF RIDE

- GOOD-QUALITY MINI GAMES AND XLAT SOUNDTRACK
- BATTLE ENGINE NEEDS AN OVERHAUL

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SOME OF IT WORKS AND SOME OF IT DOESN'T. IF IT'S STORY AND ATMOSPHERE YOU'RE AFTER, SHADOW MADNESS IS A SURE THING, BUT THE BATTLE ENGINE AND MODELS NEED HELP.



STREET SK8R

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

▲ The PS needs a good skateboarding game. There are plenty of decent snowboarding games for the system, but for some odd reason no developer has tapped into the skateboarding genre. There's definitely a market for this type of game in America.

Enter EA's *Street Sk8er*, a fast-paced, Japanese-developed skateboarding game that's sure to entice fans of the sport.

Street Sk8er is driven by arcade-style gameplay. The tour consists of three urban environments—LA, New York, and Tokyo—with bonus stops at the Halfpipe, Big Air, or Bowl. In each of the main events you take advantage of structures built into the environment to perform tricks. These include rails for railsides, halfpipe areas, and super-fast routes that emphasize steering. The more consistent you are, and the faster you race without bailing, the better your Trick Level becomes during ramp moves. And with a higher Trick Level, you earn more moves.

Why would you need to earn moves? Well, that's one of *Street Sk8er*'s few shortcomings.

To execute a trick, you just press up, down, left or right and X; there are no sequences, holds, or additional commands. The type of trick that you execute is solely dependent upon your speed, the type of ramp, and your current Trick Level. Essentially this means that improved racing skills yield better tricks, because you're hitting the ramps in good condition.

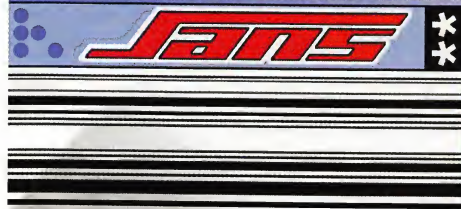
Street Sk8er's trick system is very accessible for beginners—once you've learned the track layouts (thus maintaining high speeds), the newer tricks start pouring in. The racing is fun, too, because the long track layouts are cool, the graphics are impressive, and the frame rate is great. Personally, however, I would've enjoyed a deeper trick system, like most snowboarding games.

Thankfully *Street Sk8er*'s controls are dead-on, and there's quite a bit of replay value as you raise your Trick Levels, apply points to individual player stats (like Jump, Tricks, etc.), and open up new parts of the three huge courses by completing the Tour over and over again. Very enjoyable! ☞



Trick areas are scattered around each huge track. Even more will open up once you've completed the game. Replay value? You bet. You'll find a favorite route...

street sk8r street sk8r street sk8r street sk8r street sk8r street sk8r street sk8r



- UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE GAMEPLAY
- TIGHT CONTROLS THANKS TO MICRO-CABIN

- NICE LARGE TRACKS AND GOOD ENGINE
- LIMITED TRICK SYSTEM IS DISAPPOINTING

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SS IS ALL ABOUT BASIC GAMEPLAY, BUT IT'S ACCURATE AND FAIR. SOMETIMES THAT'S WHAT COUNTS. THE ENGINE'S NICE, TOO, AND THE CONTROLS ARE TIGHT. RECOMMENDED.

B



RECOIL

DEVELOPER: ZIPPER INTERACTIVE PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS AVAILABLE: NOW



From developer Zipper Interactive and EA comes this high-paced first-person tank shooter. *Recoil* is very easy to pick up and play, offers vast levels filled with specific missions, and is driven by a pretty impressive 3D engine. And although it has a few faults that prevent it from being a real franchise title, it's definitely a worthwhile and intense experience for shooter fans.

Recoil places you at the helm of a super-advanced mobile attack unit, the XB-80. You'll be dropped into enemy territory and given very clear instructions concerning primary directives and mission parameters. These are fed to you on the fly via message indicators, typically leading you to the next task right after one is completed. The way these sub-missions build up to a grand, final mission is really well executed and consistently involving. The giant 3D levels have been constructed to accommodate this type of multi-mission-based gameplay. They've been designed to closely follow the mission instructions, encouraging logical progression (Bukem!). However, they're still wide open and surprisingly free form; you could conceivably drive and blast your way right past the designated "mission area" if you completely ignored every indicator and message. The engine allows for impressive draw distance, but the shapes and texturing are very simple, as are the effects. In a world of trigger-happy war machines, however, this decidedly blunt look somehow does the trick.

Recoil's controls are excellent, with a full-on FPS-style keyboard/look mouse config. The turret rotates instantly all around as you blast one of 18 powerful weapons (like sonic lasers and big, fat seeking nukes). You can swap first- and third-person views and your super tank can acquire various adaptive upgrades, such as water ability. Moving around is fun. The tank is fast and responsive, and you're given reasons to jump it now and then, which is always good. The enemy patterns and designs are a little too repetitive: small boring tanks, big, slightly more exciting tanks, mounted guns, big buildings to blow-up. No big surprises. You can lock on to any one of these targets from a distance, too, making life even easier...if it weren't for the annoying mass of lesser enemies that smother you. Really, it's frustrating sometimes when you can't avoid fire from a dozen moving sources because every angle seems to be covered. Coupled with the oft-times troublesome look camera, which gets stuck off to the side of your tank (requiring a quick tap of the centering key), *Recoil* has some control problems, most apparent in the face of maximum action. It's still a solid package and ultimately a fun ride for talented shooter fans. ☘



ROLLCAGE

DEVELOPER: ATD PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS AVAILABLE: NOW



I reviewed the PlayStation version of *Rollcage* last month, and if you recall, gave it a B. I liked its concept and visuals on the PS, but criticized its often out-of-control nature. The PC iteration you're looking at here is the exact same game, but I'll be damned if the control doesn't feel a little bit better here, a little bit more connected and solid. Maybe it's the higher frame rate that instills this version with a better overall feel, or maybe it's just my weakness for the huge graphical leap over the little PS. Whatever the reason, *Rollcage* feels better on PC, and its highly arcade-like overtones seem even more effective.

If you missed last month's review or are unfamiliar with *Rollcage*, it's a combat racer where your big-wheeled car has the ability to drive along ceilings and walls while you unleash a barrage of colorful and explosive weaponry. The tracks are short and fast, and you'll race through a nice variety of futuristic locales, blowing up scenery and fighting like mad to keep your car racing straight and true.

With multiplayer network options and accelerated graphics, it's none too surprising that the PC version of *Rollcage* leaves a better impression. But I can't give it a higher score simply because it looks better and has more options on a two-thousand-dollar platform. ☘



all-format reviews

CR-1014 5-6



CR-1014 5-6

COUNTER + POINT



Aliens Vs. Predator: Rebellion • Fox Interactive

As Reviewed By: Bryn Williams (page 61-63)



If you get one game this year, get AVP. This goes doubly for fans of the sci-fi classics. An absolute must for FPS junkies.



■ DECENT MULTIPLAYER; AWESOME, DEEP SINGLE PLAYER



■ REAL "SH#S YOURSELF" MOVIE ATMOSPHERE, EFFECTS AND LEVEL DESIGN

Mike Griffin:

B+

FINALLY: VIDEO GAME JUSTICE FOR THE ALIEN/PREDATOR SERIES. AND THE FACT THAT FOX HOOKED UP WITH REBELLION (THE ORIGINAL JAGUAR A.V.P. GUYS) IS SO COOL. THE IMAGES AND ATMOSPHERE THEY'VE CREATED IN THIS DEFINITIVE UPDATE ARE STUNNING. PLAY THE MARINE QUEST FOR A FEW HOURS AND YOU'LL COME AWAY THOROUGHLY SHAKEN. WHEN YOUR MOTION TRACKER IS BEEPING OUT OF CONTROL, I PROMISE YOU WILL FEEL THE FEAR. THE ALIEN AND PREDATOR PLAY SO TRUE TO THE FILMS IT'S SCARY. AMAZING AMBIENT SOUNDS ARREST YOUR EARS WHILE MAD LIGHT-SOURCING AND STUNNING ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN PLAY HAVOC WITH YOUR POOR, ABUSED, DARTING EYES. THE MULTIPLAYER'S A LITTLE WEAK, BUT THIS IS A WICKED FPS NONETHELESS.



■ PERFECTLY IMPLEMENTED ALIEN, PREDATOR, AND COLONIAL MARINE GAMEPLAY



■ SOUND EFFECTS AND IMAGERY CREATE AN INCREDIBLE ATMOSPHERE

Mike Hobbs:

B+

EVER SINCE JIM CAMERON'S ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TAKE ON THE ALIEN MYTHOS, MANY GAMERS HAVE NO DOUBT FANTASIZED ABOUT PLAYING A GAME EXACTLY LIKE WHAT WE HAVE HERE. REBELLION'S SECOND TRY AT AVP (REMEMBER THE JAG?) BRINGS ALL THE CARNAGE OF THE ALIEN AND PREDATOR FILMS INTO A SPEEDY AND AWESOME-LOOKING FPS. LOADS OF ABSOLUTELY SPOT-ON SOUND EFFECTS AND INCREDIBLE AMBIENCE LITERALLY TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY AS FANTASIES OF BEING IN THE FILMS BECOMES REALITY. RUNNING ALONG A CEILING AT BREAKNECK SPEEDS AS AN ALIEN, CLOAKING AND USING THERMAL VISION AS A PREDATOR, OR BLASTING APART AN ALIEN AS A COLONIAL MARINE WITH A SMART GUN, YOU'LL DO SOMETHING OR OTHER.



Fighting Force • Core • Grave

As Reviewed By: Brady Fiechter



I QUITE ENJOYED FF ON PLAYSTATION FOR THE FIRST FEW LEVELS, AND THEN, BY THE TIME I REACHED THE LAST FEW, I FOUND IT MONOTONOUS, BORING, REPETITIVE, AND TERRIBLY ELEMENTARY. PLAYING THE N64 VERSION, I CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION, ONLY IN THE FIRST LEVEL.



■ THE CHARACTERS CAN DRINK OUT OF THE COKE MACHINES



■ IT'S SAD THAT I FIND THE ABOVE STATEMENT A HIGHLIGHT

Dave Halverson:

C-

I'M STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS GAME IS DOING FLOATING AROUND IN 1999. BACK WHEN IT WAS CONCEIVED IN '97 IT WAS SOMEWHAT OF A NOVEL IDEA - A FINAL FIGHT/BARE KNUCKLE CLONE TAKEN INTO 3D. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT AS THIS GAME WAS BEING PUT TOGETHER, GAMES AROUND IT WERE BREAKING NEW GROUND, SO BY THE TIME IT CAME OUT FOR THE PS IN '98 IT WAS A SNORE - AND I'M SORRY TO SAY, IT STILL IS. IF YOU LIVE FOR THE OLD-SCHOOL BEAT 'EM UPS I SUPPOSE YOU MAY FIND FIGHTING FORCE SOMEWHAT ENTERTAINING, BUT PERSONALLY I'D MUCH RATHER HAVE AT THE IMPORT BARE KNUCKLE 3, OR FINAL FIGHT GUY. THIS IS AN ABUSE OF 3D.



■ TRAGIC ENGINE CLOUDS THE SCREEN WITH FILTERED TURD



■ BORING, LIMITED, UNINSPIRING GAMEPLAY

Mike Griffin:

D

WHY BOTHER? SUPERFICIALLY SPEAKING, FIGHTING FORCE 64 HAS CRAP GRAPHICS (TERRIBLE FILTERED BLUR!), CRAP SOUND, AND GIANT CRAP SLOWDOWN. MORE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS THE LAME GAMEPLAY. THERE'S SUCH A LIMITED RANGE OF ACTIONS THAT IT'S ESSENTIALLY AN INSULT TO LONG-TIME BEAT 'EM UP FANS...A SLAP IN THE FACE FROM THE HAND OF MONOTONY AND BOREDOM. THE CAMERA OFTEN FREAKS-OUT IN THE 2-PLAYER MODE, AND THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN HANDLE PLAYING THIS GAME, SO EVEN THAT'S BEEN RUINED. OTHERWISE, NOTHING'S CHANGED SINCE THE PS VERSION, 'CEPT FOR A LITTLE "PLAYER BONUS" AT THE END OF EACH LEVEL FOR THE PERSON WITH THE MOST KILLS. WHOO HOO.



Gex 3 Deep Cover Gecko • Crystal • Eidos

As Reviewed By: Dave Halverson (page 64-65)



GEX 3 DELIVERS MORE OF EVERYTHING YOU LIKED ABOUT 2, ALONG WITH ADDITIONAL PLAY MECHANICS AND BETTER DIVERSITY, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM AS POLISHED.



■ AN EXCELLENT 3D ENGINE FOR AN ACTION/PLATFORMER ON PS



■ THE CAMERA STILL NEEDS SOME WORK

Brady Fiechter:

B-

THIS LATEST INSTALLMENT IN THE GEX SERIES SHOWS THAT THE DEVELOPERS KNOW HOW TO MAKE A GOOD 3D PLATFORMER; THEY JUST NEED BETTER HARDWARE, A BIT MORE FOCUS AND A LOT MORE TIME ON THEIR HANDS TO MAKE A GREAT ONE. GEX 3 FEELS LIKE A GAME OF BITS AND PIECES THAT NEEDED TO BE EXTENDED TO MAKE A COMPLETE EXPERIENCE. THE CHARACTER HAS ITS APPEAL, THE ENGINE IS SOLID FOR PLAYSTATION, AND GAMEPLAY CAN PROVE QUITE ENJOYABLE WHEN PLAYING ITS STRONG SUITS. BUT LIKE IN GEX: ENTER THE GECKO, THE SPORADIC CAMERA IS ALWAYS THREATENING TO UNDERMINE THE FUN.



■ SOME OF THE LEVELS ARE AMAZING, LOADED WITH GREAT GAMEPLAY



■ SOME OF THE LEVELS ARE FLAT AND UN-INSPIRED.

Tom S.

B-

THE ELEMENTS IN GEX 3 THAT ARE BUTTONED UP ARE JUST GREAT, BUT THE LEVELS THAT AREN'T DETRACT FROM THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE. WHY BOTHER RIDING A CAMEL WHEN IT ONLY TAKES YOU A COUPLE OF FEET ON THE SCREEN, OR A TANK THAT SHOOTS AT NOTHING BUT BUILDINGS. SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT MANY OF THE IDEAS BEHIND THIS GAME NEVER GOT FULLY IMPLEMENTED. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE ARE LEVELS OF SHEER BRILLIANCE MAKING IT OBVIOUS THAT SOME THINGS WERE RUSHED. THE MUSIC, TOO, IS SUSPECT, WITH TOO MANY VARIATIONS ON ONE THEME AND AN OVERALL LIGHT FEEL. IT NEVER MAKES YOU GO "WOW!" I LIKE THE BOSSES (ALTHOUGH THEY ARE TO EASY) AND I LIKE MANY OF THE LEVELS, BUT OVERALL I FEEL THIS GAME COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH BETTER.



Lode Runner 3D • big bang software • infogrames

As Reviewed By: Grady Fiechter (page 66)



LODE RUNNER 3D IS NOT YOUR TYPICAL PUZZLE GAME - OR YOUR TYPICAL N64 TITLE, FOR THAT MATTER. CHALLENGING AND ADDICTING, THE GAME EXCELS IN ITS ORIGINALITY.

B-

LODE RUNNER GAMEPLAY WORKS IN 3D

- TONS OF LEVELS AND PUZZLES, TOO MUCH SLOWDOWN



Mike Griffin:

C

LODE RUNNER IN 3D WORKS QUITE WELL. IN THE TRANSITION, THE BASIC NATURE OF LR'S CLASSIC GAMEPLAY HAS BEEN TOTALLY PRESERVED. WITH THE ADDITION OF SPECIAL ITEMS AND COMPLEX BOMBING PATTERNS, LODE RUNNER ON THE N64 SUCCEEDS IN IMMERSING YOU INTO ITS UNIQUE BRAND OF PUZZLE ACTION. ALSO, THE GAME IS DEFINITELY LONG ENOUGH TO SATISFY PUZZLE GAMERS. THE THEME IS FUTURISTIC THIS TIME, WITH STRANGE ALIENS TO DESTROY AND AVOID, AS WELL AS A COOL WARPING PLANETARY FIELD IN THE BACKGROUND. I LIKE IT. LODE RUNNER'S WEAKEST ELEMENT IS ITS FRAME RATE, WHICH ABSOLUTELY CRUMBLES WHEN THE SCREEN FILLS WITH EFFECTS OR BAD GUYS.



VERY CLEVER PUZZLE DESIGN AND GOOD IMPLEMENTATION OF 3D GAMEPLAY

- HORRIBLE AESTHETIC AND SLOPPY CONTROL



Mike Hobbs:

C+

THERE'S NO DENYING THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS NEW 3D TAKE ON THE CLASSIC LODE RUNNER, AND IT'S A TESTAMENT TO THE QUALITY OF THE GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE HERE THAT THE RATHER POOR GRAPHICS DON'T GET IN THE WAY OF ME GIVING IT A RECOMMENDATION. THE PUZZLE ELEMENTS HERE ARE QUITE GOOD, WITH CLEVER SOLUTIONS AND PLENTY OF HEAD SCRATCHING IN STORE. BUT THE LOOK OF THE GAME IS POOR, WITH UNATTRACTIVE COLORS AND FREQUENT DROPS IN FRAME RATE. WORST OF ALL IS THE RATHER RIDICULOUS LOOKING LEAD CHARACTER, WHO ANIMATES SO POORLY AT THE COMPLETION OF EACH LEVEL, YOU WONDER WHY THE CAMERA EVEN BOTHERS TO GO NEAR HIM.



Power Stone • capcom

As Reviewed By: Mike Griffin (page 80-81)



I HAPPEN TO BE TAKEN, WHOLESOMELY, BY THIS EXCELLENT CAPCOM FIGHTER. I COULD (AND HAVE) PLAYED IT AGAINST FRIENDS FOR HOURS ON END, MARVELING AT ITS ACCURACY, FLUID MOTION, AND FREE-FORM BEAUTY.

B+

CAPCOM WORK THEIR MAGIC, THIS TIME IN A FULLY 3D ENVIRONMENT

- INCREDIBLE GRAPHICS TEEM WITH COLOR AND DETAIL



Mike Hobbs:

B+

CAPCOM'S VIRGIN DREAMCAST EFFORT PROVES TO BE EVERYTHING I'VE COME TO EXPECT FROM THE MASTERS OF ONE-ON-ONE COMBAT. THE HIGH-SPEC DC GRAPHICS ARE AN ABSOLUTE JOY TO BEHOLD, BUT IT'S THE INNOVATIVE, FULLY 3D GAMEPLAY THAT MAKES POWER STONE SPECIAL. TOSsing ABOUT CHAIRS, BOXES, POTS, AND JUST ABOUT ANYTHING YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON WHILE CLAMORING FOR POWER STONES AND WEAPONS MAKES EACH MATCH THOROUGHLY FRANTIC AND ENTERTAINING. WHILE THERE ISN'T HUGE DEPTH HERE, THERE'S MORE THAN ENOUGH TO KEEP PLAYERS INTERESTED FOR HOURS. WITH GREAT CHARACTER DESIGN, MUSIC, AND BACKGROUNDS, CAPCOM'S FIRST TRULY 3D FIGHTER PROVES THAT THEY CAN INDEED WORK THEIR FIGHTING GAME MAGIC ON MORE THAN ONE PLANE.



SHOW YOUR FRIENDS JUST FAR GRAPHICS HAVE COME

- UNPRECEDENTED ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT HOUSE THE BRISTLING COMBAT



Grady Fiechter

B+

POWER STONE PLAYS WITH A MANIC ENERGY, IGNITES THE SCREEN WITH SCINTILLATING EFFECTS, COMPLETELY OPENS THE FIGHTING ARENA TO INTERACTION WITH NEARLY EVERYTHING, AND PUTS THE PLAYER IN COMMAND OF ALL THE ACTION WITH SMOOTH, SIMPLE CONTROL. WHAT A GREAT GAME THIS IS. BEAUTIFUL IN SO MANY WAYS, PS SUCCEEDS AS A FIGHTING GAME SEARCHING TO GIVE PLAYERS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE FAMILIAR. IT'S NOT DEEP, BUT THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT. YOU PICK THIS GAME UP, POUND ON THE BUTTONS AND ENJOY THE CRAZY ENERGY AND SOAK IN THE NEWNESS OF THE TECHNOLOGY THAT AFFORDS THE IMAGINATIVE LEVELS. POWER STONE OR VIRTUA FIGHTER 3? I'LL TAKE POWER STONE.



Psychic Force 2012 • taito

As Reviewed By: Dave Halverson (page 82-83)



A HIGH-DOLLAR ARCADE GAME IN YOUR HOUSE, RIGHT NOW, PSYCHIC FORCE 2012 IS A BEAUTIFUL-LOOKING GAME THAT IS AS DIVERSE AS IT IS FUN TO PLAY.

B+

FREE-FLYING GAMEPLAY PROVES STRATEGIC AND UNIQUE

- GRAPHICAL QUALITY NOT UP TO STANDARDS SET BY CAPCOM AND SEGA



Mike Hobbs:

B+

TAITO'S "IN-THE-AIR" ARCADE FIGHTER COMES TO DREAMCAST MORE OR LESS INTACT, AND PROVES TO BE FUN AND INTERESTING GAME. GRAPHICALLY, THERE IS INCONSISTENCY IN THE BACKGROUNDS, AS SOME ARE A BIT BUDGET, WHILE OTHERS, LIKE THE FACTORY AND CITYSCAPE, ARE FULL OF 3D ELEMENTS AND QUITE NICE TO BEHOLD. THE CHARACTERS, TOO, AREN'T ALL THAT THEY COULD BE. WHILE THE DC RENDERS THE COOL ANIME CHARACTERS VERY WELL, THEY LACK THE POLYGONAL COMPLEXITY OF POWER STONE'S OR VIRTUA FIGHTER'S COMBATANTS. BUT THESE COSMETIC CONSIDERATIONS DON'T GET IN THE WAY OF THE FREE FLYING GAMEPLAY, WHERE LONG RANGE ATTACKS AND CLOSE-UP COMBOS LEND PSYCHIC FORCE 2012 A UNIQUE AND SATISFYING FEEL.



UNIQUE 360° GAMEPLAY, NICE BACKGROUNDS

- POOR CHARACTER DESIGN, PS-STYLE POLYGON COUNT



Mike Griffin:

B-

AT ONE TIME I WAS A BIG FAN OF THE ORIGINAL PSYCHIC FORCE, SO I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS ENHANCED SEQUEL. NOW I REALIZE THAT MANY GAMES HAVE APPEARED SINCE THE ORIGINAL PF THAT SATIATE MY HUNGER FOR "ALTERNATIVE" FIGHTING, AND THAT PF'S FORMULA ISN'T MY PREFERRED STYLE. I DO ENJOY THE FREE-FORM NATURE OF THE FIGHTS, AND I LIKE THE CLEVER DESIGN OF THE POWER BAR/LIFE BAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON YOUR ANIME-STYLE ATTACKS. THE CHARACTER MODELS ARE PRETTY BASIC, BUT THE 3D BGS ARE NICE. IN TERMS OF THE 360 DEGREE MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, I'D RATHER DO MY GO-ANYWHERE FIGHTING ON THE GROUND WITH POWER STONE, EHRGEIZ, OR DESTREGA.

COUNTER + POINT



Recoil • zipper interactive • Electronic Arts

As Reviewed By: Mike Griffin (page 73)

RECOIL IS 100 PERCENT TANK SHOOTER ACTION. THE MOUSE LOOK CONTROLS ARE EXTREMELY INTUITIVE AND THERE ARE LOADS OF WEAPONS AND COOL TANK UPGRADES, LIKE AMPHIBIAN MODE, HOVER MODE, ETC., TO BYPASS ELEMENTS OF EACH GIANT ENVIRONMENT. THE MISSION STRUCTURE IS STRONG, TOO.



- REALLY INTUITIVE CONTROLS FOR MOUSE AND KEYBOARD GAMEPLAY.
- WIDE OPEN EXPANSES GIVE YOU THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE IN THE ACTION

Dave Halverson:

B+

NOW HERE'S A PC GAME THAT JUST KICKS BUTTOX. IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT I LAY HANDS ON MOUSE AND KEYBOARD TO PLAY A GAME, BUT IN RECOIL'S CASE THERE'S NO RESISTING ITS INTUITIVE CONTROLS, FLUID ANIMATION AND BREAK-NECK PACE. THE GAME IS, SIMPLY PUT, A GAS. THE VEHICLE AND LEVEL DESIGN IS EXCELLENT, AND COUPLED WITH THE GAMEPLAY, RECOIL IS A GAME YOU FEEL AS YOU ROLL (AND HOVER) THROUGH IT. REALISTIC PHYSICS, FIERCE ADVERSARIES, AND WIDE-OPEN ARENAS CONSPIRE TO MAKE RECOIL THE BEST TANK-BASED GAME I'VE PLAYED SINCE GRANADA! IT'S TRUE ABOUT THE FMV BEING ON THE CHEESE SIDE, THOUGH. BUT IS IT EVER NOT?



- A SOLID AND CHALLENGING ACTION TITLE THAT KEEPS THINGS SIMPLE
- RATHER BASIC ENVIRONMENTS TAKE AWAY A BIT OF THE ACCELERATED SHEEN

Mike Hobbs:

B

AS A STRAIGHT-UP ACTION TITLE, RECOIL FEELS MORE LIKE AN ACCELERATED CONSOLE GAME THAN YOUR AVERAGE PC GAME, BUT DON'T READ THAT AS AN INSULT. THERE'S A DEARTH OF GAMES LIKE THIS ON PC, AND THE TOUGH-AS-NAILS ACTION OF RECOIL IS A WELCOME CHANGE FROM THE RTS AND FPS SWEEPSTAKES. THE GRAPHICS DON'T SEEM QUITE AS EXPLOSIVE AS THEY DID WHEN WE FIRST PREVIEWED THIS GAME, AS EXTENDED PLAY HAS AMPLIFIED THE RATHER SIMPLISTIC NATURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMPLEXITY, BUT IT'S STILL A GOOD-LOOKING GAME. WITH LOTS OF GREAT WEAPONS AND CHALLENGING BUT STRAIGHTFORWARD MISSIONS, RECOIL OFFERS UP A HEALTHY DOSE OF CONSOLE-LIKE SHOOTING ACTION. CHEESY FMV AND INTERFACE, THOUGH.



Ridge Racer 4 • Namco

As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs (page 68-69)

THIS GAME IS A MUST-PURCHASE AS IT STANDS AS THE BIGGEST RIDGE RACER YET AND THE ONLY DRIVING GAME TO GIVE GRAN TURISMO SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT.



- AWESOME ENGINE EVOKES WICKED SENSE OF SPEED
- A LITTLE EASY, BUT PLENTY OF CARS TO REVEAL

Mike Griffin:

B+

IN MANY WAYS, RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 IS A BETTER GAME THAN GT, AT LEAST FOR FANS OF ARCADE-STYLE RACING. IT PLAYS BRILLIANTLY. THE CONTROL, USING PAD, ANALOG OR JOG-CON, IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT. THE AWESOME RR RACING STYLES (GRIP OR DRIFT) ARE IN EFFECT, FEATURED ON DOZENS OF AWESOME CARS. AS FOR THE GRAPHICS... DAMN! NAMCO HAVE THE PS HARDWARE TIED-UP AND GAGGED! THIS GAME LOOKS BETTER THAN RALLY 2 ON DC IN SOME WAYS, AND IT CERTAINLY EVOKES A GREATER SENSE OF SPEED AND DEPTH. SADLY, RR4 IS A LITTLE TOO EASY, AND IT DOESN'T OFFER THE COOL CAR CUSTOMIZING OF RAGE RACER, WHICH I MISS. NAMCO CONTINUES TO PRODUCE SOME OF THE BEST RACING MUSIC, TOO.



- OOZES CLASS AND DISTINCTION FROM EVERY PORE
- INCREDIBLE VISUALS AND MUSIC AS PER USUAL

Gryn Williams:

A-

NAMCO'S STUNNING RACING LEGACY CONTINUES TO AMAZE WITH THE LATEST IN THE SERIES BEING THE BEST SO FAR. WITH OVER 320 DIFFERENT CARS, MANY BEAUTIFUL COURSES, TOP RACING TUNES AND VISUALS, RRT4 HAS BEEN CAPTIVATING ME EVERY SINCE MY FIRST GAME. THE FMV IS SUPERB AND ALL ASPECTS OF GAME DESIGN (FROM COLOR SCHEMES TO CAR MODELS) ARE SECOND TO NONE. PERHAPS NOT AS TECHNICALLY COMPETENT AS GRAN TURISMO, RRT4 HAS GOT IT WHERE IT COUNTS AND IT PLAYS LIKE AN ABSOLUTE DREAM. GET THIS RACER OVER ANY OTHER ON THE PLAYSTATION. YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.



Rushdown • canal+ Multimedia • Electronic Arts

As Reviewed By: Grady Flechter (page 77)

I LOVE ARCADE SPORTS GAMES, AND I LOVE THE IDEA OF HAVING SNOWBOARDING, KAYAKING AND MOUNTAIN BIKING IN ONE PACKAGE. MAYBE RUSHDOWN WILL HAVE A SEQUEL IN WHICH THE GRAPHICS LOOK GOOD, THE COLLISION IS CLEANED UP, ANIMATION IS ADDED, AND THE GAMEPLAY IS FIXED.



- THE MOUNTAIN BIKE AND KAYAK PORTIONS ARE SOMEWHAT ENTERTAINING
- THE SNOWBOARDING, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS PRETTY HURTIN' STUFF

Dave Halverson:

C-

RUSHDOWN ATTEMPTS TO DELIVER ON THREE COUNTS, USING ONE ENGINE FOR THREE TYPES OF PLAY. THING IS, I'M NOT SURE WHY. I'D HAVE REALLY LIKED A FULLY REALIZED MOUNTAIN BIKE OR KAYAK GAME, BUT INSTEAD I GET MILDLY ENTERTAINING VERSIONS OF EACH ALONG WITH A POO SNOWBOARDING GAME WITH ROBOTIC ANIMATION AND BUSTED PHYSICS. I'M GOOD TO GO WITH 1080 OR COOL BOARDERS UNTIL A DC OR PS2 SB GAME COMES ALONG. RUSHDOWN MOVES AT A BRISK FRAME RATE BUT THE CLIPPING, POOR COLLISION, AND WEIRD OBSTACLES (BANNERS ARE ROCK HARD, AS ARE GIANT HAZARD CONES) KEEP THE GAMEPLAY ONLY MILDLY ENTERTAINING.



- 60FPS IS GREAT...WHEN THE ENVIRONMENTS MAINTAIN COMPLEXITY
- EACH SPORT IS A LITTLE TOO UNDERPLAYED TO SUCCEED

Mike Griffin:

C

EA CANADA REPRESENT THREE EXTREME SPORTS, ARCADE-STYLE, IN RUSHDOWN: MOUNTAIN BIKING, SNOWBOARDING, AND KAYAKING. THE MOUNTAIN BIKING IS PRETTY LAME AND EXHIBITS SOME REALLY QUESTIONABLE CHARACTER ANIMATION AND PHYSICS. THE SNOWBOARDING IS LIMITED BY SIMPLISTIC CONTROLS. AS FOR THE KAYAKING...IT'S KIND OF TWITCHY. ALSO, THE WATER, DESPITE LOOKING DECENT FOR THE MOST PART, BEHAVES STRANGELY AT TIMES. I REALLY HAD HIGH HOPES FOR THE MOUNTAIN BIKING AND KAYAKING BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN NEGLECTED IN SPORTS GAMES, BUT THEY'RE JUST TOO UNREAL. SNOWBOARDING WAS A WEIRD CHOICE AS THE THIRD SPORT, BECAUSE UNLESS YOU DEVELOP A FULL-ON SNOWBOARDING GAME (NOT ONE IN A PACKAGE OF THREE GAMES) THERE'S BIGGER AND BETTER COMPETITION ON PS.

9 89 Studios are beginning to command some attention. At this rate, they're well on their way to forging a favorable, although not quite spectacular, reputation for themselves as one of the PS' most active developers. Their games are usually very playable, with decent engines and sound, and *3Xtreme* is no different.

3Xtreme is akin to *Twisted Metal 3*, in that this is 989's first foray into the popular *Xtreme* series. As is the case with *TM3*, the 3D style is all-new in *3X*. Characters and objects are fully polygonal, and the long tracks are a totally different breed of design when compared to previous *Xtreme* games. *3X*'s relatively simple tracks emphasize tricks instead of one's ability to race through cross traffic, trees, and boulders. I miss the exotic tracks of the first two games, but thankfully *3Xtreme* still holds true to the series' mixed freestyle racing protocol: Skateboarders, BMX bikers, and in-line skaters all race against one another, side by side, on the same courses. This cross-sport theme offers up many unique possibilities, but gameplay and track design must be strong to accommodate the three sports. The game

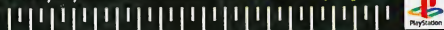


The courses are Xtremely long and wide open, and the scenery, although mostly basic, is at least varied and fully light sourced. When three different extreme sports collide, these big courses really provide.

gamers' republic sports '99

3 XTREME

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: spring

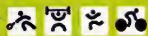


offers solid racing, scrapping (with L & R punching), and predictable yet abundant trick areas. And although the sheer environmental scale and variety of the previous *Xtreme* games is nowhere to be seen, there's still a multiplicity of action and peril sprinkled throughout the levels.

If you're up to the task, you'll guide one of 13 unique polygonal competitors across 27 tracks in the Aztec, The Metro, Lakeside Park, Arroyo Grande, and the Seacliff. In reality, there aren't 27 separate track backgrounds. Instead, there are several different versions of each of the five aforementioned environment types. The engine supports pretty good draw-in distance, so each track configuration looks as detailed as the next, even in the split-screen mode. Unfortunately, the frame rate needs tweaking right now, and the character movement, despite being realistically animated, is still a choppy display to behold. Most important, however, is the fact that every trick ramp and railslide is totally open to each of the three sport types, so there's no clear advantage to being a biker, boarder, or skater.

3Xtreme has licensed equipment from bigtime manufacturers like Santa Cruz, K2, Salomon, and Redline, and the animation is based on motion-captured X-Games gold medalist Andy Macdonald and well-known extreme athletes Chris Potts and Todd Grossman. 989 have also commissioned Ultraspank to do the soundtrack. Every element seems to be coming together well enough, but I'm looking forward to a few tweaks before *3Xtreme* can properly do the series justice. We'll see how it turns out next issue.





One of the least exploited categories in sports gaming, and therefore one of obvious opportunity, is tennis. So the news that Ubi Soft is throwing their hat into the ring (or court as it were) should have fans celebrating. With the women's and men's games packed with stars and tennis being a completely 3D-friendly medium (not to mention the fact that there's no competition on the Nintendo 64), Ubi Soft's timing couldn't be better.



All Star Tennis features a peculiar mix of actual and fictional characters. I would rather see all of the top seeds participate, or consider going without any at all, as players like Graf, Agassi, Sampras, Seles, Hingis, and Rafter are sorely missed. Then again, it'll be a moot point if the game doesn't shape up in certain areas before it's released. Right now AST suffers from a slow pace and a lack of camera positions, uninspired fictitious locales, and, well, dry gameplay over the long haul. The designers need to get themselves a copy of Let's Smash and learn how to make tennis fun before they take another step. While I admire the fine simulation elements they are keying in as a heavily multi-player targeted game, they need to add a choice of music and throw in some more realistic looking locales to go with the actual players they have signed on.

Also, the courts are the wrong size, there's too little room behind the baseline, and there's no scoreboard visible behind the players during the matches (which, by the way, suffer from embarrassingly low attendance). That Wimbledon center court feel is just nowhere to be found, and the next benchmark in tennis will surely need it. The player animation and physics are going in the right direction. Let's hope the overall game buttons up as well. ⚡

gamers' republic sports '99

ALL STAR TENNIS

developer: smart dog publisher: ubi soft available: may



Every year the dominant baseball series receive their typical updates, every year I digest the press releases touting just how incredible these updates are, and every year I cut through the hype and end up returning to the one baseball game that has managed to get it right: World Series Baseball on Saturn. Maybe the rejuvenated sport of baseball is finally leaking into video game development, because Triple Play 2000 is a title that, even in its sporadic previewable state, has invoked the word "cool" from my lips a number of times while locked into a heated contest. Is this my World Series beater?

That this enthusiasm is stemming from a Triple Play title is telling: last year's version was blighted by framerate problems and, overall, was hugely average. Triple Play 2000 is already showing marked improvement to the series visually, boasting dynamic lighting, staunch player models with a wealth of animations, and an excellent representation of the 3D stadiums. From the focus on

player emotions as they react to a situation to the employment of over 75 camera angles tracking the ball, the



game is constantly bombarding you with visual pizzazz in an attempt to dispel the sense of tedium that can sometimes creep into a baseball title.

At least the game won't be accused of lacking swift pacing. By balancing depth with ease of play, the control scheme and offense and defense interaction gives you extreme command over the game while maintaining the proper level of flow to suspend the excitement for a nine-inning game. When working in tandem with the improved graphics and stellar stadium sounds, the familiar but proficient play mechanics are already pushing Triple Play 2000 far ahead of last year's offering. ✨



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TRIPLE PLAY 2000

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: april



The advent of 128-bit gaming will have an astounding impact on the sports genre— as much or more than it will anywhere else. Crowds will be layered singular people (or reasonable facsimiles thereof), rather than confetti on a slanted board; AI will reach new heights (playing on defense may actually become fun), and, of course, the players themselves will feature realistic human traits like flexing muscles, fatigue, and wear. As you can see, the first game to usher in the next wave of sports is well underway – Visual Concepts’ *NFL Football* for the Dreamcast. A launch title, it will undoubtedly make a splash at this year’s E3 and pave the way for football games to come. Those are some big shoes to fill, but something tells me – namely the shots on this page – Visual Concepts are up to the task. ⚡



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NFL FOOTBALL

developer: visual concepts publisher: sega available: september



It features the extreme sports of mountain biking, snowboarding and, for the first time in a video game, kayaking. It alludes to a hard-edged, adrenaline-packed experience of downhill racing over inhospitable courses coiling through Africa, Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia and North and South America. It backs the racing with original techno and hardrock songs, offers well-known sponsors and a collection of authentic equipment to appeal to the player's individual style. Oh yes, *Rushdown* sounds spectacular, the consummate quick sell – crowds of unfortunate gamers looking for an alternative sports game will flock to it – but soon enough reality reveals the programming ineptitude that strikes at nearly every corner.

With its emphasis on quick-to-pick-up, arcade-style mechanics, *Rushdown* makes the egregious error of relying too heavily on simplicity, leaving each sport to exhibit crude, nearly identical physics. To its credit, the game harnesses an excellent frame rate for a great sense of speed, but the racing, which takes place against a single opponent or timed checkpoints, becomes haphazard as the blocky, muddled graphics obscure the racing line and the sloppy controls send your racer exactly where you don't want him to go. Poorly designed and littered with solid objects that allow you to pass through them before awkwardly falling to the ground, the shoddy courses combine with glitches, tattered polygon racers, anemic animation and a host of other why-does-the-game-do-that moments that are sure to keep you wondering when somebody is finally going to do one of these games the right way. ❄️



Looks like some intense racing down some cool courses, doesn't it? Just wait till you see things in scraggly motion.



gamers' republic sports '99

RUSHDOWN

developer: electronic arts publisher: canal+ multimedia available: now



world republic

[i] This month's WR includes full-on reviews of the latest DC games...and it's good news! They're all solid titles, and there's more on the way! We also have the newest *Armored Core* title for PS, *D&D Collection* for SS, and loads of cool tidbits!

World Republic Review • developer/publisher **Capcom** • available in japan now

power stone



Capcom's onboard with an awesome 3D fighter!

Capcom have an amazing track record when it comes to action and fighting games. Fetch a few memories of your favorite old-school Capcom games – maybe *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*, *Strider*, *Bionic Commando*, *Final Fight*, or *Alien vs. Predator*. Now, consider the quality of recent Capcom greats, like *Street Fighter EX*, *Resident Evil 1&2*, and the contemporary 2D powerhouse fighters, *Street Fighter 3*, *SF Zero3*, and the *Marvel* games. Capcom is guilty of releasing plainly average titles now and then, but these decent efforts stand out in such a way because their other games are so strong. Oft-times, their games have defined the preconceived gameplay style of an entire genre, as is the case with *Street Fighter* and *Resident Evil*. And just as they have always filled arcades with popular, even legendary titles, Capcom have provided a game lineup across the world to practically every important system since 8-bit. Here we are, in the midst of the Dreamcast's early first-generation software boom, and already Capcom have provided a powerful

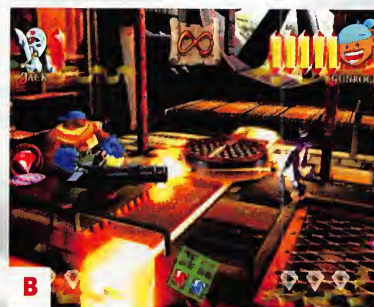


game to the system. *Power Stone* is an exceedingly well designed fighter, easily among the strongest hardware showcases on DC, and it introduces a new brand of wickedly fun, extremely accessible 3D action fighting.

In the two weeks that I've been playing *Power Stone*, I've come to regard it as one of the most accurate and brilliantly balanced 3D fighters in recent memory. And yet it's nowhere near as complex as most fighters these days. Instead of long, linked combos, or in-depth countering routines, *Power Stone* emphasizes pure speed and vicious timing. At the core of PS's gameplay, you'll find a super-smooth go-anywhere engine. The goal of each high-speed fight is to manipulate the 3D environment to your advantage to attack or defend.

Part of this goal includes collecting power stones, multicol-

POWER STONE



(A) Ryoma assaults tiny Ayame with a massive bazooka blast. Luckily her shield completely absorbs the impact. (B) Gunrock fires an unrelenting stream of hot lead from the massive mini-gun. You can stand, rotate, and spray this Predator-style ordinance. (C) Galuda is one of the larger characters, so he can pull poles right out of the ground and smack foes to great effect. Once you're powered up, anybody can rip them from the floor. (D) Ryoma viciously slashes this poor Fokker across the face!



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or gems that are littered about the 3D arenas. Collect three of the stones, and your character morphs into a supercharged fighter equipped with multiple, devastating attacks for a short period of time. Fighters need to bash the gems out of each other (or run like hell to grab the third gem), so there's this omnipresent urgency at hand – a sort of manic energy driving the ebb and flow of each battle round.

The characters are locked on to each other when executing any offensive move that might connect, so that when you attack, by any means, your efforts are immediately directed towards your opponent. You can engage in close



hand-to-hand attacks or throws, very effective jumping attacks, or use the interactive environment to assault your foe with objects and special moves. Up close there are simple but powerful punch and kick combos to employ as well as dazzling throws, or you can pick up chairs, tables, molotov bottles, poles, crates, and barrels to launch at opponents. Let it be known that you can catch most of these objects if you're quick enough...and return them a second later! Mind you, there are projectiles that are best avoided should they come your way. These include great, searing puffs of flame, a barrage of bullets, a volley of deadly explosive rockets, or a rapid-fire concussive blast of ring lasers generated from flame throwers, awesome mini-guns (*Predator*-style!), bazookas, and exotic, futuristic pistols. There's even a shield to block these weapon blasts and any other attack. All of the objects and items I've mentioned can be interacted with using the Grab button (used for throws too), and you can also use this all-purpose button to execute special moves. Run or jump against any flat surface and press Grab, and you'll fly backwards towards your opponent. Run into poles with Grab, and you'll swing around a couple of times catching momentum before launching into your opponent. Big dudes like Galuda (or any character when stone-boosted) can rip a pole from its mooring and sweep it across the screen for big damage. You can also jump and latch onto poles or ceilings and shimmy/hang, dropping down onto your enemy's head with other potent special moves.

Every facet of the fiendishly effective gameplay is working in simpatico with the go-anywhere, do-anything nature of *Power Stone's* intricate little environments. You'll be more and more creative each time you play because of it. 'Tis a lovely, totally accessible piece of 3D fighting gameplay indeed, all of it executed at dizzying speeds.

Almost as important as its unique and balanced gameplay, *Power Stone* offers amazing aesthetics and options. The frame rate is firmly locked at 60, shuffling along stunning high-res textures and beautifully designed environments without a care in the world. Wicked polygon-intensive effects and transparencies mercilessly shower the screen. And about those characters: the models are totally sealed, flawlessly textured and animated, and they're so detailed and shaded I find myself comparing them to Capcom's 2D characters! The stage music is very good, and the voices and effects are ideal and of the highest quality. In terms of options, *PS* has all your typical fighting game stuff, but goes the extra mile by offering a bunch of secrets in the 15-page "Power Stone Collection" (see info box, above). I'm happy that I opened all the Collection secrets; they're very cool, but now I can concentrate on versus fights!

To the few, hopelessly jaded Capcom freaks who bathe and revel in the intricacies of their other fighters, this universally playable game may be disappointing, perhaps even sacrilege. In light of the perfect balance, twitch controls, and just plain fun gameplay, it appears that such people would be selling themselves short. Any gamer can understand how to play *Power Stone* well, but not everybody will, thus proving that Capcom doesn't cater exclusively to a purist crowd when it comes to fighters. Any action gamer would do well to check out *Power Stone*, especially free-roaming fighter fans (*Bushido Blade*, *Ergheiz*), and, believe it or not, shooter fans. Oh, and fighting purists (as Capcom redefines the term) need also apply. Besides being absolutely gorgeous, *Power Stone* is too solid and too playable to pass up. ✨

(A) This is Ryoma's 'super' form, a gleaming, reflective metallic samurai. Here he pelts Fokker with his most effective Power Stone attack, a shower of energy blades. (B) Wang Tang (my personal fave) blasts a cool Dragonball Z-style fireball into the giant mutant last boss, Final Valgus.



Los Angeles
ロサンゼルス

Tokyo
東京



World Republic says: "Capcom supports the Dreamcast during its earliest days with a hyper-original, graphically stunning 3D fighter...top-notch controls and action." B+

World Republic Review • developer Taito • publisher Taito • available in japan now

psychic force 2012

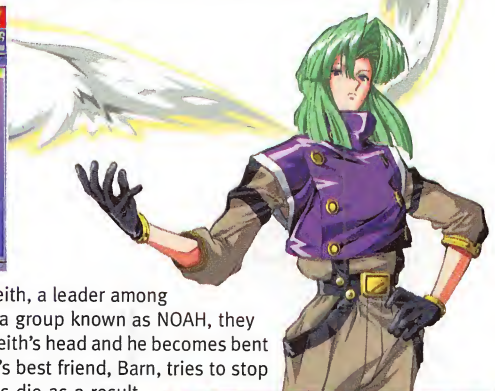


The latest installment in Taito's magical fighting series gets the full Dreamcast treatment...

The year is 2010...

Government-bred and -controlled fighting entities known as "Psychicers" are masters of the Psychic Force. But inhumane breeding by the government caused many of them to die in the process. Keith, a leader among them, rebels and rallies the Psychicers together. Forming a group known as NOAH, they set out to build their own Utopia. But power soon goes to Keith's head and he becomes bent on ruling all of humanity as payback for their abuse. Keith's best friend, Barn, tries to stop him, and a war among NOAH breaks out. Many Psychicers die as a result. The feud ends when Wong (a member who turns out to be a double agent) betrays Keith, and as a result the remaining factions of NOAH are captured and re-introduced in to the military...where they become even fiercer. Now, the year is 2012, and a reunited NOAH, Neo NOAH, has sworn to avenge their fallen leader, rising against Wong and his military forces.

Long overdue, diversity among the fighting game



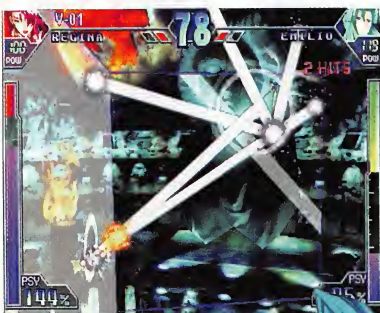
(A) The luscious Regina displays just how beautiful polygonal graphics are becoming...and her underpants! (B) Huge fiery blasts fill the screen without a glimmer of chug. (C) Heavyweights like Gates are better off using long-range attacks. A nimble middleweight like Regina can easily maneuver to perform a neck-wrenching thigh hold. Hey, if you have to get between two thighs...who better?

電気製品



category is at an all time high. Not only does this assure the category longevity, but it opens it up to new users as well. Back in the day there were only two ways to go: the precision 2D and hand-drawn splendor of the *Street Fighter* series or the less-precise blood-soaked digitized madness of *Mortal Kombat*. Year after year the two battled for market share, upgrading and improving...until 3D came along. Now, just a few years later, both series are still in the mix, it's just that the mix has gotten a whole lot bigger. From the wide-open spaces of *Destrega* to the complex playing fields of *Power Stone* and beautiful 60fps motion of *Tekken*, fighting games continue to break new ground and, in my opinion, get better. *Psychic Force 2012* adds yet another dimension to the fray, with its free-floating 360° battles set among heavily anime-inspired backdrops in the Neo-Tokyo vein. The characters in *Psychic Force* command elements – environmental factors like water, gravity, ice, fire, wind, etc. (represented by a separate spirit gauge) – producing battles that become a strategic dance between ethereal and hand-to-hand techniques. Other factors that figure into the equation are the three weight classes, blocking/countering, and dodging. Purely from a gameplay standpoint, *2012* is a thoroughly entertaining fighter, with an amazing soundtrack and good depth. Conceptually, the game evokes a mood that I find most attractive – that of two rival genetically engineered societies that battle in the skies for personal freedom.

A big part of what makes *2012* work for me lies beyond the surface, braided with the music and the motif. Graphically, there are a couple of blemishes, such as a few blurry textures and the occasional obvious seam, but in comparison to current home-console standards (and most of what you'll find at the arcade), *Psychic Force* is a thing of beauty. The character designs are lifted straight from the anime archives and the pyrotechnics often fill the screen when performed at 100 percent. Taito and Zuntata continue to deliver burning hot niche products to the hard-core user. Now all we need is *NinjaWarriors 2000!* ⚡



Los Angeles
ロサンゼルス

Tokyo
東京



(A) Gudeath's Earth power produces a gigantic pair of, er, spheres... (B) While Emilio powers up, Wendy prepares a devastating projectile. (C) The background in the Lava stage appears a bit blurry.

World Republic says "A high-dollar arcade game in your house, right now, *Psychic Force 2012* is a beautiful-looking game that is as diverse as it is fun to play." B+

World Republic Review • developer CRI publisher CSK • available in japan now

aero dancing



CRI's formation flying game proves surprisingly addictive...



Having had a soft spot for aviation ever since an early childhood visit to the Smithsonian, my affinity for this unique flight-sim may not be shared by all. However, those with a taste for games off the beaten path just might warm to this formation flying Dreamcast effort from CRI.

Developed around the Blue Impulse flying team, *Aero Dancing* straps you into the nimble T-4 trainers favored by Japan's equivalent of the Blue Angels. Through the course of twenty training missions, you'll learn how to take off, land, and perform all manner of trick formation flying, from Vertical Cupids to Rain Falls. You'll learn how to use the more esoteric (for a console game) aspects of flight control, like flaps and air brakes, and will even get to control your landing gear. Certainly, these details are boring to most, but the crisp Dreamcast graphics and realistic-feeling flight model lend an addictive sense of satisfaction to these potentially mundane events. You can easily see the ailerons and flaps moving and they really seem to bite into the air, giving a wonderful sensation of real flight that is enjoyable in and of itself.

In addition to training sessions (which culminate with an Exhibition Mode), there is the Sky Mission Attack, where you must fly through rings (ala *Pilotwings*) within a fixed time. Here, you get to sample many different locations and planes, finding the best craft for each challenge. F-15s, F-4s, F-16s, and T-2s make up just some of the planes on hand. All are incredibly well modeled and look fantastic going through their motions in external view. And in the internal cockpit view, you can enjoy the effect of blacking out as the screen grows dim when you pull over seven Gs.

Rounding out *Aero Dancing* is a four-player mode where three of your closet flying buddies get to put on an "aero dance" as you fly in formation for the sheer enjoyment of flying. It's limited in that you must all stay fairly close to one another or the session ends, but it's fun to screw around with.

As I said, *Aero Dancing* is not for everyone. There's hardly any action here as entirety of the gameplay is built around simply controlling your plane with precision.

The graphics are good, though, with its huge landscapes and excellent plane models, and the replays are quite fun to watch. But anyone wanting *Ace Combat*-style action should stay away and wait for Konami's *Air Force Delta*. =>

(A) With smoke trail activated, a Delta formation roll is just beginning in this replay shot. (B) An F-4 is about to pierce a ring in Sky Mission Attack mode. (C) The working rudder and high-quality plane modeling can be seen to good effect on this F-16.



World Republic says "Formation flying is certainly not for everyone, but those in the mood for something different will appreciate the realistic physics and graphics." B-

電気製品



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **Capcom** • available in japan now

dungeons & dragons collection



Retro gaming on the Saturn in full effect...*D&D Collection* remains a classic!

How cool is this? Having near-perfect home versions of both *D&D* arcade games is truly a blessed event. When I say "near perfect," I'm not kidding. *D&D Collection* is an extremely worthy purchase for fans of the series or other old-school Capcom arcade side-scrollers like *Warriors of Fate*. And despite certain glaring technical flaws, *D&D Collection* includes wholesome and playable versions of both *Tower of Doom* and *Shadow over Mystara*.

The second game, *Shadow over Mystara*, is clearly the superior *D&D* game in this retro 2-disc collection set. Not only is it a better-playing game overall (longer and much deeper), it also cannot run without the support of the 4-Meg Ram cart. This equates to beautiful animation, screens filled with very active sprites, and no slowdown. Capcom really did need the four extra Megs; *Shadow over Mystara* is to *Tower of Doom* what *Super Street Fighter 2* is to *Street Fighter 2*. It ran on better hardware, with more memory, and the art style had significantly matured between the two generations. Remember how buff Sagat became between the two *Street Fighters*, just like the Dwarf in *D&D*?

It's not that *Tower of Doom* is a bad game, it's just simplistic beyond measure by today's standards. And short, so very short! The Saturn version plays perfectly and looks very good, however, and I consider it to be an excellent port. *Shadow over Mystara*, on the other hand, is at least an hour longer, and its gameplay is vastly improved over the first game. There are pad rotation moves to execute, the item and magic systems are infinitely more refined, and the level structure is more balanced and rewarding. Also, there are more characters to choose (including the female Thief - she's awesome!), more types of enemies, and cooler scenarios and boss fights. This version even has a bonus "Item Collection" option. As you play, you'll find special items that are recorded in the Collection for use in future games! You can even permanently upgrade your main sword and shield.

One ugly trait both games share is intolerably frequent and lengthy loading times. I had assumed this would be necessary with *Tower of Doom* because the game still has quite a bit of animation, but I didn't think *SoM* would be similarly plagued thanks to the 4M cart. I suppose there's just too much animation. *SoM* also decided to crash on me several times, on three different Saturns with three different combinations of Ram Cart and/or converters. Unsettling, to say the least. Anyway,

if you're a fan or if this is your type of game, *D&D Collection* is definitely recommended. It's a fantastic 2-player co-op game.

(A) The Thief and Elf (an unlikely pair!) defend themselves against the sinister demi gods. Sprites galore, and practically zero slowdown! (B) This confrontation proves to be a difficult task. Nagpa, the slovenly but powerful elder mage summons two of *D&D*'s most intimidating foes to help his cause. The 4-meg cart ensures ample beast animations, too. (C) Dwarves definitely aren't magic-users. This hardened fighter misses the Man Scorpion by a mile!



PlayStation Review

last blade
GAME BY SNK

Ho-hum 2D fighters are a terrible occurrence these days. It's a dying breed, after all, and by now each and every one of them should be extremely refined. Capcom seems to understand this well, and SNK have an awesome 2D fighting franchise with *King of Fighters*. They also have disappointing fighters like *Last Blade*.

Despite an impressive (and incredibly long) anime intro, *Last Blade* on the PS falls short in almost every way. In regards to its technical side, *Last Blade* has poor graphics and animation. It is plagued by low-quality voice samples and sub-par music.

Last Blade fails to deliver quality gameplay because: (a) The CPU A.I. is pathetic. You can cut through the ranks in Arcade mode using little more than low sweeps and uppercut moves, as I've done several times. (b) The moves and weapon collision style, while reminiscent of *Sam Sho* (which is a good thing), simply do not evoke any satisfaction. The control is good, but again, even that is ruined by slowdown. You won't approve of the budget graphics and sound, and the gameplay is less than inspiring.



World Republic says "The frequent loading is a problem with both discs. *Shadow over Mystara* is a strong title though, boasting great animation and 2-player gameplay."

World Republic Review • developer Sega/Compile publisher Sega • available in japan now

puyo puyon



電気製品



Linking jellies has never looked so good. Forget Tetris 4D.

The Dreamcast's second puzzle game does a lot better job of impressing and delighting than the dull *Tetris 4D*. *Puyo Puyon* is still the same jelly-linking vertical puzzler, but the super-clean DC presentation and four-player mode make all the difference in the world. Incidentally, the name *Puyo Puyon* is a clever integration of the Japanese word for "4," which can be pronounced, among other ways, as Yon. I'm sure somebody out there will appreciate this factoid.

Americans are probably most familiar with *Puyo Puyo* as Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean

Machine on Genesis and *Kirby's Avalanche* on SNES. Like all good puzzlers, the concept is wonderfully simple and maddeningly addictive. By linking four

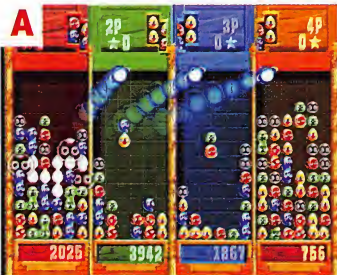
or more same colored jellies (all with little eyes and expressions), you make them disappear. Simple enough. The fun and strategy comes in setting up chain reactions, wherein vanished jellies shift all jellies above it downward, potentially causing more like colored jellies to line up and disappear. In competitive modes, combos send non-denominational drops over to the other player, seriously fouling their feeble attempts at setting up combos.

Puyo Puyon features a mad four-player mode and also a one-player game with a massive playfield, where combos bake little Japanese pastries for

Carbunkle to eat! Also on tap are supers, which eliminate puyos uniquely for each character but tend to make the game quite cheap.

The presentation in *Puyo Puyon* is great, with scrumptiously colored anime characters and backgrounds, though the music is a budget affair with cheapo instruments. It's the same game that many have fallen in love with, and DC owners of the PP persuasion will love this version.

And for the rest, this is puzzle game that absolutely anyone can pick up and enjoy. ='



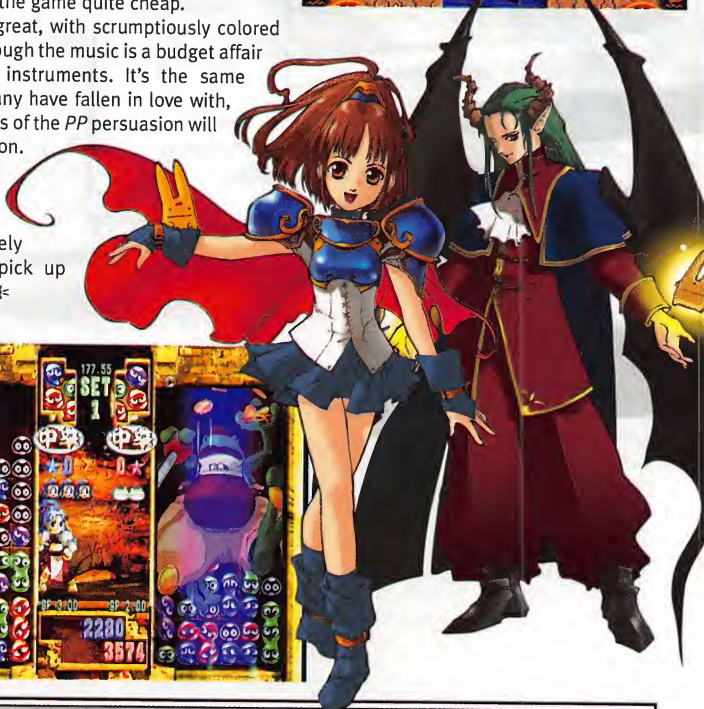
(A) The Dreamcast's manic four player mode is the best addition here. (B) In this enlarged field one player game, producing combos bakes Japanese pastries for the little yellow fellow. (C) Skeleton-T unleashes his super attack on Satan.



Dreamcast Preview

Pop n' Music

The only thing that makes these Rhythm 'n' Action games fun to play in the first place is the music. *Beat Mania* and *Dance Dance Revolution* both had great music. Unfortunately, unless you like really hideous J-Pop, you aren't gonna like this one. The controller boasts many buttons (playing this on joy-pad is insane), and the interface is nice, but at the end of the day the music sucks. Too bad. D+



World Republic says "Sure, the Dreamcast is hardly being necked by *Puyo Puyon*, but the lush colors and ever addictive gameplay conspire to make it worth your time" B+



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher From Software • available in japan now

armored core: m.o.a.



Haven't I seen this someplace before? Oh yeah, it's the same game.



It must be that time of the week again, for here we have another *Armored Core* game from From Software. Getting the most out of their initial engine investment, this popular Japanese series continues to evolve oh so slightly, but only less casual observers would be able to tell this version from the previous two. Yes, new features have been added, but once again, *Master of Arena* continues to feel more like an expansion pack than an all new game.

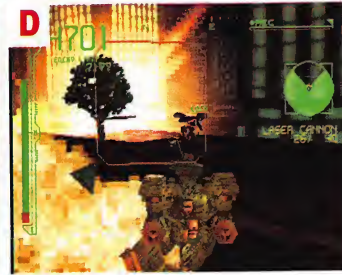
Surely, most are familiar with the basic idea of the *Armored Core* series. As a mech pilot, you take on a number of paying requests (missions) where you earn credits with which to purchase different mech parts (credits can also be earned by challenging mechs one on one). You can buy different heads, arms, legs, core pieces, generators, on-board computers, and weapons. The wealth of parts and possible configurations is staggering and a big part of the game's appeal.

Armored Core: Master of Arena adds two important new features: the Ranker Mk and Ex Arena Modes. In Ranker Mk, you can custom design a mech opponent, adjusting firing rate, aggressiveness, and lock-on frequency. In Ex Arena Mode, you challenge a number of different mech configurations for supremacy of each unique style of mech, from caterpillar to humanoid types. There are new missions in *MoA* as well, though they're no huge leap over those in the previous games. And unfortunately, we can't attest to the value of the new PocketStation features, as the little devices remain elusive in this country as of press time.

So with the same graphics, interface, and basic premise, *Master of Arena* is only for those with a voracious appetite for new mech parts and missions. It's still a good formula, but one that needs to evolve hugely in the next entry. >=



(A) This dusky, western town is the backdrop for explosive mech combat. (B) In one of *MoA*'s new missions, a fortress defending turret gets the old lead treatment. (C) A four-legged mech battle in one of the open air arenas. (D) Reverse-legged mechs duke it out in this cityscape. Blasts effects are bright but identical to previous game's.



World Republic says "From Software should have the addage, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' on their letterhead. It's more of the same with a few tweaks." C+

Playstation Preview

option tuning car battle 2

GAME BY JALECO

Several real-life Japanese tune-up shops battle it out yet again in *Option Tuning Car Battle 2*. That's about all you need to know about this abysmal-looking racer. Glaring seams, warping textures, and bad pop-up make mince meat out of this game's attempt at capturing the flavor and performance idiosyncrasies of the different tune-up shops. The handling and control are OK, but there's just way too much competition in this mature genre. >=

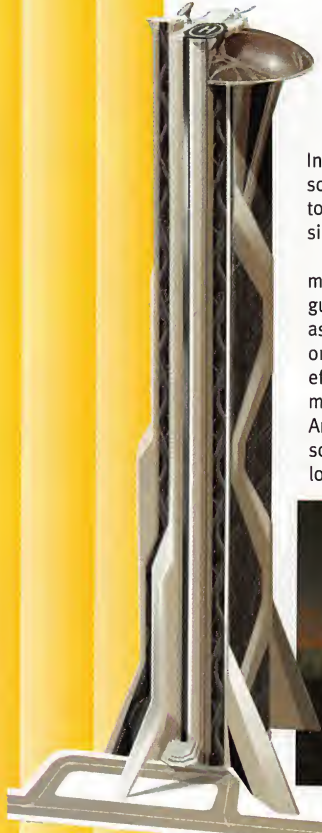


Los Angeles
サンゼルス

Tokyo
東京



電気製品



World Republic Review • developer/publisher **Sammy!** • available in japan
deep freeze PlayStation

Horrendous voice acting can't save this tepid action title.

Deep Freeze comes to us from Sammy, a Japanese company known more for their colorful slot and pachinko machines. And just as Sammy is a curious company, so too is their original PlayStation offering, an action title featuring pre-rendered backgrounds and ridiculous English voice acting.

In *Deep Freeze* you play as an elite member of the Inter-Ants – that's International Anti-Terrorist Service to you and me – and you've got to stop so and so from doing this. You'll get to choose a partner at the outset of the game who'll be able to provide covering fire and thrilling conversation, and is controllable to a certain extent by issuing simple commands.

Where *Deep Freeze* gets hung up is in its attempt to provide fast action in a series of pre-rendered environments. Where Capcom's *Resident Evil* series' action is paced slowly enough to work, *Deep Freeze* will have you gunning down scores of baddies while you inadvertently switch from one pre-rendered background to another as you move around attempting to avoid or unleash fire. This has the nasty side effect of completely disorienting you, making the whole affair cumbersome. And let's not even mention the enemy AI, so gracious in standing there as you reload. =>



World Republic says "Deep Freeze almost works as an action title, but the pre-rendered environments work against it. Some of the shooting action is decent, but this import from Sammy just doesn't get. C

World Republic Review • developer **CAVE** publisher **CAPCOM** • available in japan NOW
tricky sliders PlayStation

Cave returns with another snowboarding game...this time on PS through Capcom!

I was totally sucked in to playing *Tricky Sliders* the moment I discovered it was a Cave-developed game. What's so special about Cave, you ask? Well, they developed the other *Sliders* game, *Steep Slope Sliders*, on the Saturn. This was one of the finer late-generation SS games, with an excellent engine, awesome music, and cool replay editing features. I expected great things out of Cave's sophomore effort, especially considering the potential for a strong 3D engine on PS.

I have been let down. *TS* has an engine that crumbles into non-buffered zig zag mania plagued by severe pop-up. Quite the shocker considering *SSS* was pushing some decent polys with a great frame rate. I think this is happening because memory and polygons are being wasted (?) on a talkative helicopter camera man and a warping polygonal skyline. Or perhaps Cave knows the Saturn extremely well. Either way, not impressed.

In terms of gameplay, *Tricky Sliders* controls precisely like *SSS*, but with slightly tighter movement on the characters. This is a good thing. Unfortunately, the tracks are a little weak. Thankfully there's an excellent Scenario mode that takes your character through many types of events, and cool options like Board Decal Editing add major interest. &



World Republic says "I was initially very surprised that Capcom would pick up *Tricky Sliders*. The engine appears to be stuck in beta stages. Thankfully there are plenty of modes and solid controls." C+

Deep Freeze © Sammy! 1999. Tricky Sliders © CAPCOM 1999.



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher NEC • available in japan now

sengoku turb



They just don't get any more busted than this did last issue... Beware the Turb...



Welcome to the weird world of *Sengoku Turb*, seemingly the first ever melding of hallucinogenic drug use, infantile polygonal structure, and ice cream cones. The story goes something like this: Due to a shock wave, the result of a mysterious explosion in outer space, our heroin Jino Chan crash lands on planet Lion. The inhabitants of this strange world, cats and sheep, are at war, with the sheep on the brink of totally devastating the cats. As luck would have it, Jino Chan lands in the Nation of the Cats and is instant-



ly recognized as a savior and made commander of the Cat Army. It gets better... Orphaned as a child, Jino Chan, a very cute girl, is a little on the whacked side with a tendency to do wicked things unconsciously.... Such a fit led to her to, uh, murdering her adopted family! She now roams the galaxy unaware of her special abilities: robbing and pillaging and swindling... The perfect soldier? Or a ticking time bomb?! You make the call in *Sengoku Turb*, only for the Sega Dreamcast! As you can imagine, the gameplay is as whacked as the story. Essentially, you move from place to place with your assigned posse of militant cats and annihilate the wooly threat, picking up a truly odd quiver of weapons and armament along the way. While the game looks entirely harmless on the printed page, it is portrayed in such a way as to be disturbing, even nightmare-inducing in a Teletubbies-like so-cute-it's-evil way. The odd character design, coupled with the demented music and eerie gibberish the kittys and sheep speak, makes for an utterly creepy overall look and feel. Graphically, the game is as simple as they come (although there are some impressive transparencies and effects), but aided by the amazing Dreamcast hardware even this, excuse the pun, turd, looks good in a freakish sort of way.



The equivalent of *Funky Horror Band* when the Mega CD hit Japan a year before it landed here, *Sengoku Turb* is a game you only order if you are in a desperate dry spell or are intent on owning every Japanese exclusive game for the system. Otherwise, save yourself. And go watch Teletubbies instead. Did I mention that they're evil? ⚡



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World Republic says "Sengoku Turb is just too weird in every way. Under the silly exterior there's not much in the way of depth or enjoyment." C-



Los Angeles
ロサンゼルス

Playstation Preview

monster rancher 2

GAME BY TECMO

Tecmo have created a really cool *Monster Rancher* sequel! O.K., so the virtual pet thang still isn't everybody's idea of time well spent, but *Monster Rancher 2* does it so well you can't help but fall into the experience.

In *MR2*, you still get to create your beast by inserting a music CD into the PS, which is then read for tracks and content, yielding a randomized creature. I spent an hour at one point stuffing disc after disc into the PS to create an entire roster of powerful creatures. When you're not using the creatures, you can put 'em on ice for later. Once you've chosen your champion, take the freak to the Ranch and start training his ass. There are loads of different training events and the graphics herein are actually pretty good. Be fair, though, by allowing the monsters plenty of sleep and food, because every week another *Monster* tournament rolls around. These tournaments are varied and exciting, and your beast becomes increasingly proficient with specials and its evasive abilities, raising its class (and yours) among other beasts and trainers. I hope Tecmo bring this one to the U.S. soon; it's a worthy sequel we should all be enjoying.





STUNT RACE

[publisher] nintendo
[genre] racing
[system] snes
[year] 1994

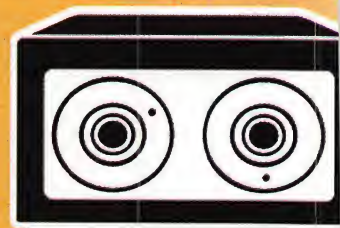


If ever there was an example of gameplay triumphing over technology, *Stunt Race FX* is it. As the second FX-chipped game to come from Nintendo and Mr. Miyamoto, *Stunt Race* threw more polygons around than *StarFox* (albeit in a cropped, smaller screen), and despite its super-low frame rate, managed to be thoroughly playable and loads of fun. Chugging along at a sub-15 fps clip, it's quite astonishing that even in this age of *R4* and *Sega Rally 2*, I still found myself enjoying this game immensely. It is for that reason that I have chosen it as my retro game of the month.

If you've never played *Stunt Race*, let me set the stage. Starting out with a choice of three bug-eyed vehicles, you'll challenge three CPU competitors over twelve unique courses. All kinds of simple yet cool effects litter these courses, such as clearing fog (years before *WaveRacer*), rain, falling rocks, and busted-looking galloping horses. Each course is fun and challenging and full of variety.

In addition to the standard racing, there is a Stunt Trax Mode, where you must collect stars through obstacle courses, and Battle Trax, a two-player split-screen mode where you race in miniscule little windows.

The fact that *Stunt Race FX* is playable at all is amazing considering its frame rate. And to be honest, it's not the most quick-witted racer, but is it ever fun in the most classic Nintendo tradition – simple, addictive, and cheerful. Worth checking out all over again.



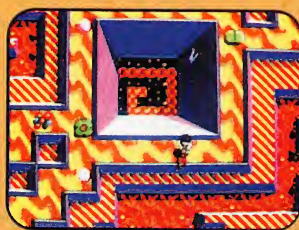
EX-MILES

<<retro video game assimilation>>

What makes a game worthy of appearing in the hallowed halls of a retro section, especially our first? If you ask me, the criteria should be that the game amazed you the first time you played it and that no matter how much time passes, you still love it. The first time I gazed at *Maze Hunter 3D* through the wondrous Sega 3D Glasses, I about poo'd. It honestly looks as though you're gazing many feet into your television... like you could just stick your arm in there and pinch the little Maze Hunter's head. And although the gameplay is somewhat simplistic

(beat alien globs that slither and float, find items and the key and then head for the exit), there are quite a few items waiting to be beaten out of magic boxes that are essential to your survival. Jump or Power shoes enable you to pound elevated boxes and ground-based enemies, and the Absorb Suit lets you to take up to 3 hits without dying. There's also quite a roster of enemies, and lots of gun power-ups to make 'em pay. The star attraction, though, is the immersive 3D effect.

The combination of the three-deep graphics, mesmerizing assortment of ambient 8-bit bleeps, and labyrinth-style gameplay to this day lures me into the game's grasp. If you have the means, I highly recommend searching out the Sega Glasses and *Maze Hunter 3D*. While you're at it, check out *Out Run 3D* and *Zaxxon 3D* too.



MAZE HUNTER 3D

[publisher] sega
[genre] action
[system] sega m.s.
[year] 1988





SUPER MARIO WORLD

[publisher] nintendo
[genre] platform
[system] snes
[year] 1992



SMW was the first (and some may say the best) game to be released for Nintendo's newly born 16-bit wonder console. Boasting Mode 7 rotation, 98 levels, vibrant graphics, amazing sound and classic Nintendo platforming gameplay, Miyamoto and the big "N" had made quite a debut.



SMW sticks out in my mind for many different reasons, but mainly because it was the game that really turned me into a hardcore gamer. In order to fully complete *SMW*, you had to exercise skill, timing, puzzle solving and joystick prowess if were you to become successful.



I remember the first time I completed the Star Road special stages which actually caused me to experience many different emotions, including rage, fear, sorrow and elation! I can't believe that there is any gamer worth their salt out there that hasn't played this game and really appreciated it for what it is, but if there are, heed this warning. You may not like Mario and his cutesy pals, but if you have the cajones to fully finish the game, you'll never think of Nintendo as girly ever again.

Hail to the king of video games, because this is right at the top of the pile. An absolute classic of our time, and so much more at the same time.



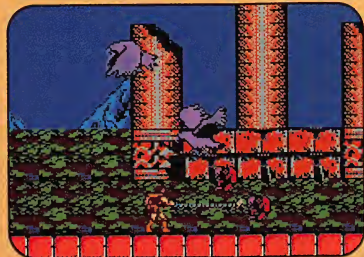
CASTLEVANIA

[publisher] konami
[genre] action
[system] nes
[year] 1986

The NES has long since fallen into the abyss of technological antiquity, but there exists a pack of games that will forever hold their place in history: *Mario*, *Metroid*, *Zelda*, *Castlevania*. Of course, we all have our favorites that linger in our minds for many reasons, but these are a short list of what will always hold a special place in my memories as a gamer. And staunchly perched at the very front is *Castlevania*, the first and arguably best in a series of indomitable platformer games that have culminated into what I consider one of the finest gaming experiences of the relatively short history of gaming: *Symphony of the Night*.

But without the archetypal whip-wielding, medusa-head-sidestepping, Grim Reaper-slashing gameplay of the original, there would be no inspiration for the series that no other has quite matched. Drawing its immeasurable appeal from a gothic foundation, the game carried my young, impressionable imagination away, and for hours at a time, my only reality was what was in front of me on my television.

Even today, when I revisit this classic game, *Castlevania* manages to entertain with infectious, moody music, perfectly simple gameplay and unequalled style. Unequaled, at least in its time. As technology and game design continue to move forward, trips back to an 8-bit transylvania will undoubtedly lose their resonance. But never will the label of "classic" elude *Castlevania*.



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THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES
 •1999 ADV FILMS (USA)
 60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH
 ★★☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Story: When a ritual to send them home goes awry, a group of travelers find themselves marooned with only one way to return home to Japan – strip search every Elf in the land!

As the elven priestess Celcia was performing the restoration spell to send the group homeward, Junpei, the fighter of the bunch, decided he'd like to see her perform it naked, and broadcasts his wish loud and clear. As a result, she loses her concentration and the spell breaks off into five parts, tattooing itself on to five random elves. So, I take it you get the name. *Those Who Hunt Elves* is an interesting slice of anime. For starters, the first episode features land-roving fish – not something you see every day. As the trio pushes onwards, it takes down all manner of local beasts and... strips a lot of Elves!

Animation: Quality TV fare throughout with the occasional spurt of goodness during fights and magic.

Dubbing: Familiar ADV voice actors do a very nice job.

Character Design: Unique and diverse beasts abound, like land sharks, wild boars that walk on two legs, etc. The human characters, especially Celcia, Junpei, and the elves, are also very cool.

Soundtrack: What you'd expect: upbeat, fun and playful melodies for the most part.

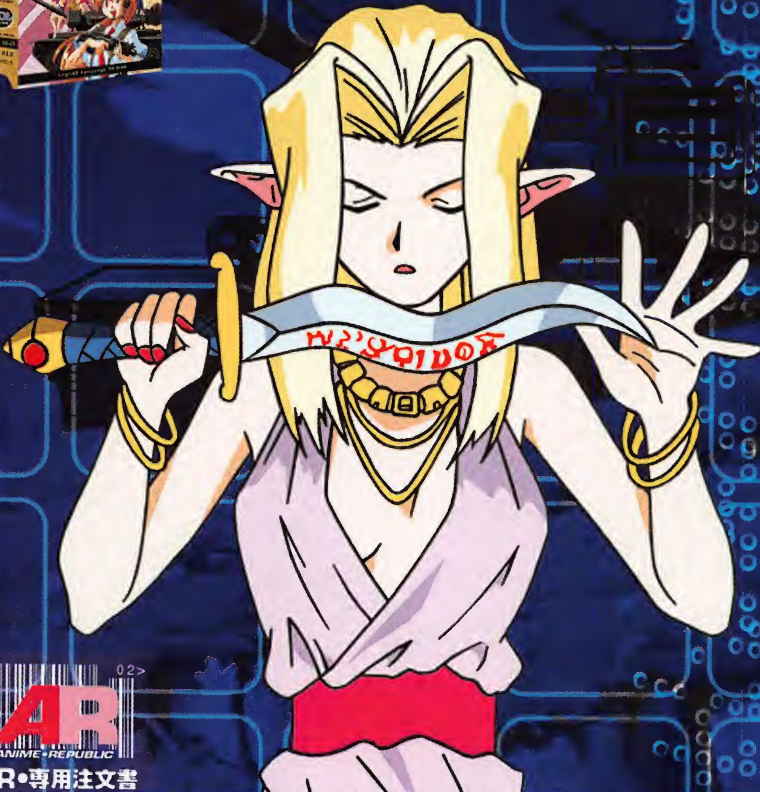
Fight Scenes: Very good. Lighthearted, yet intense and nicely choreographed.

Highlight: I'd have to say that the highlight is Celcia herself. She really carries the show.

Final Analysis: It's hard to say, based on the first two episodes. The subject matter – shapely female elves and a group of travelers rollin' around in a tank strip-pin' 'em naked – is very promising, though.



THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES



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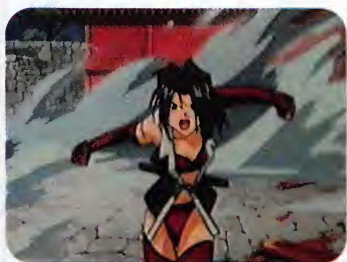
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NINJA CADETS!

•1999 ANIME WORKS • 1996 A.I.C.-YUUMEX
60 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED

☆☆☆1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY

Story: Opening amidst a dramatic surprise attack, set in black and white and beautifully animated, Byakudo Castle is being savagely invaded by the Kabusu clan. They advance rapidly using a skillfully designed arachnid-like mech and brutal force, killing all who cross their path. Caught in a lethal explosion, as the Byakudo Ninja Lord draws his last breath, he instructs his general to protect the Byakudo princess at any cost. He narrowly escapes with the baby princess in tow, but loses his left arm in the process. Our story begins many years later. The hero general's son, Kaoru, is now a young man and the princess (unaware of her birthright) is one of five Ninja Cadets. Their plan is to retake the castle by obtaining a powerful magical contained within its walls. With the scroll in the right hands they can commence on beating down the Kabusu. Branching off into pairs, Kaoru and the cadets embark on a journey back to Byakudo castle. But, of course, they're not alone...

A simple tale, yes, but it's engulfing because of the inner group banter and the inspired battle scenarios, which are spectacularly choreographed. In the second episode, when the cadets reach the scroll room within the castle, all brand of spectacular animation breaks loose. This is not to be missed. *Ninja Cadets* is a joy to behold from beginning to end. **Animation:** Excellent throughout. Even subtle movements such as walking and slight hair motion are fluid. On par with the best OVA's out there.

Character Design: The Cadets are a diverse-looking bunch, each brimming with personality in his or her own way. The tools they use, such as steel claws to scale walls, are also skillfully designed, as are the amazing-looking Kabusu clan and the complex fighting

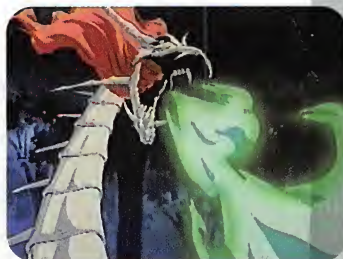
machines they pilot.

Soundtrack: Here, too, *Cadets* delivers, with a diverse ensemble that alternates between traditionally arranged background music and inspired metal riffs.

Fight Scenes: Excellent. Besides the inclusion of all manner of pyrotechnics, they are skillfully portrayed and dramatic to the core.

Highlight: In episode one a doomed mercenary sacrifices his life to perform the ultimate call spell. A lengthy battle ensues that just keeps on giving.

Final Analysis: *Ninja Cadets* is a quality hour of anime that no action/adventure fan should miss, and the second episode ends on a cliffhanger, so there's always hope for a sequel. Let's hope the tape gets the attention it deserves to facilitate that happening.



Original Japanese Dialogue with English Subtitles

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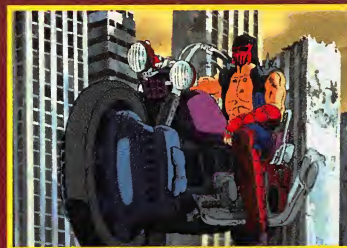
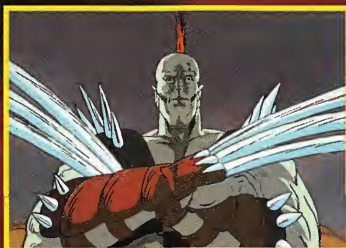


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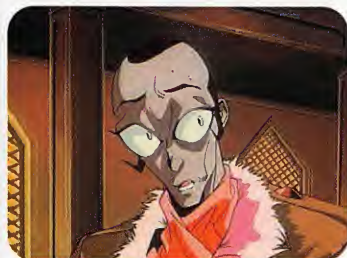


JUDGE

•1998 US MANGA CORPS.
50 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆ 1/2 HORROR/OCCULT THRILLER

Story: Ever wonder who defends the living when the dead rise up against them? No? Well, neither did I, until now. Court is now in session, as U.S. Manga Corps' *Judge* makes its DVD debut. Set among a tangled web of



deviant office politics, this occult thriller goes full circle, as the murder that opens the show ultimately closes it as well. The story revolves around a sinister trail of deceit as a young executive uses any means possible to climb the ladder of success, only to meet an ugly and untimely demise. His boss, however, seems to be the root of all evil and so it is he who is summoned to appear before the court of darkness. Too bad you have to die to get there! Ever wonder what a defense lawyer from the dark side might be like? Talk about crooked attorneys! 50 million yen or you're dead meat! *Judge* offers a look at the legal system that I'm quite sure you've never imagined.

Animation: *Judge* definitely has its moments, but overall the animation quality falls under the heading of good. The action scenes, however, are often quite fluid. So *Judge* looks great when it needs to.

Dubbing: A mixed bag, really.

Many of the characters seem totally miscast as they utter their first lines, although, by the end, some begin to gel. I found *Judge* himself too distant from his Japanese counterpart. A voice that desperately needs to evoke a lack of emotion is somewhat overplayed, resulting in a somewhat wimpish demeanor. It's a DVD, though, so the Japanese subtitled version is but a click away!

Character Design: Old-school humans and beasts for the most part, with shades of cool hyper-exaggeration like Kawamata's huge bug eyes. *Judge* has stood the test of time well, as it was originally released in 1991.

Soundtrack: Goes nicely with the action. Standard early nineties action/adventure fare.

Fight Scenes: Most of the fastidious animation is focused on the action, which is horror-inspired and very good.

Highlight: Kawamata's final judgment. As his conscience strangles him to death in the spirit world his earthly body mimics the dirty deed. Ehw!

Final Analysis: *Judge* has a cool premise. Think *L.A. Law* from hell.

While it is a little aged, it's worth checking out if you're an action/horror fan. The disc has some great features like a web link for Mac or PC, meet the cast, the laws of darkness, a choice of English-dubbed or Japanese-subtitled audio, and scene select options.



GUNDAM 0083 INTO BATTLE, ALBION

•1999 BANDAI ENT. 1991 SUNRISE (JP)
58 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆☆ SCI-FI ACTION/ADVENTURE



Story: When we last visited *Gundam 0083*, a prototype Gundam Assault Suit had been hijacked from the Earth Federation by the Zeon, who are out for revenge after a decade of peace. An endless pursuit follows as Uraki, piloting the second (identical) prototype Gundam assault suit, attempts to retrieve the suit before Anavel Gato (a Zeon hero from the one year war) can get it off the planet. Uraki, Keith and their Lieutenant stop two of the invading mechs, but Gato escapes. Uraki loses three of his comrades in the fray, and the Zeon now possess a nuclear warhead capable of killing millions. In episode 3, "Into Battle Albion," the Albion crew are ordered to recover the Gundam 02 unit. Amidst some inner strife (as new pilots are assigned to replace his fallen friends) Uraki ends up doing a week in solitary confinement, but when he emerges, he's made the official pilot for the Gundam Assault Suit. Meanwhile, Gato is preparing for the inevitable confrontation...

Character Design: Decidedly 1990-looking designs throughout. Gundams were at the height of their popularity in Japan, and so the mech suits are painstakingly detailed as a result. The characters in *Gundam 083* are realistically portrayed, as this is more an animated movie than an exaggerated tale.

Animation: Very good quality. The action sequences are especially well animated.

Dubbing: As close to perfection as it gets.

Soundtrack: War-time stuff mostly, except for the end credits tune, which features some fruity singing, and the distinctly Japanese opening theme, which is pretty cool.

Fight Scenes: Very impressive mech battles run rampant.

Highlight: The inspired Heavy-mech combat scenarios which bring the towering machines to life.

Final Analysis: I'm not a big fan of realistic-looking characters, but the story, subject matter, animation, and *Top Gun*-like military scenarios kept me glued.

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REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA

•1999 SOFTWARE SCULPTORS
75 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Story: In the latest installment of *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, much is revealed as, for one thing, we meet Utena's prince for the first time. Initially, Utena is lead to believe that student council president Touga Kiryuu is him, but she soon discovers his advances are but a ploy to lower her defenses...and it works. Utena loses the Rose Bride as a result in the first episode. Like a puppet, Anthy changes sides emotionless, and it devastates Utena. She is soon brought around by a close friend, however, and wins Anthy back against seemingly insurmountable odds. Next, that old saying comes into play...

"If it can't break out of its shell, the chick will die without ever being born. We are the chick, the world is our egg. If we don't crack the world's shell, we will die without truly being born." As many times as I have heard that, each time I think to myself, "How broken can you get?" Well, as it turns

out... Nah, I can't give it up. If you're following the series, you've earned the right to find out for yourself. Let's just say that everything that has happened up to this point, no matter how twisted it seemed at the time, has happened for a reason; just leave it at that.

Animation: As the series carries on, the animation quality is understandably dwindling. The vignettes, though, and the art style help make up for the lack of fluidity. And, of course, each duel is preceded by a beautiful clip as the sword is drawn from Anthy's torso. **Dubbing:** Very good.

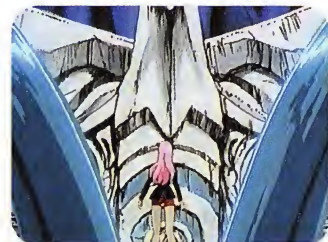
Character Design: Looong legs, pointy noses, gothic overtones. Utena is unique to the core.

Soundtrack: A full-on classical score with the three repeating tunes (the intro, battle, and end credit ditty) that infinitely stick in your head.

Fight Scenes: The duels aren't as super charged as they were in the beginning, nor do they exhibit the quality of animation set by previous episodes.

Highlight: The direction the story is taking. Many revelations take place within this 75 minutes.

Final Analysis: I'm very curious to see where the writers are going with the plot. *Revolutionary Girl Utena* is either going to venture deeper into its underlying psycho-drama guise, or turn in to the full on chick flick. Let's hope it goes totally psycho.



ORIGINAL DIRTY PAIR

EPISODE 1 & 2

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1991 (JP)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: This may be the first, old-school *Dirty Pair*, but the story is just as cool as any of their contemporary counterparts. This one set the stage.

The Lovely Angels are recruited from the 3WA for a specialist-only rescue mission. Rioting prisoners have managed to escape with the Warden in tow, taking control of the entire maximum security facility in the process. This institution has heavy-duty defensive capabilities, so Kei and Yuri are asked to find an entrance and head straight for the

captured warden. Of course, with these wacky chicks in charge, things are bound to go wrong... In the next episode, the 'Angels are obliged to work the Halloween night shift, much to their chagrin. They mistakenly "lose" a Tactical Assault Android and are forced to pursue the freak in the middle of festivities. Its Armageddon Program is moments away from kicking in, so they'd better hurry up...

Animation: It's the older-style design of repeating frames and overlaid cells, but the quality is still there. Really active battle scenes!

Dubbing: Not as strong as the new *DP Flash* series, but it's easy on the ears anyway.

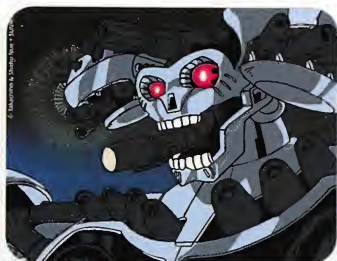
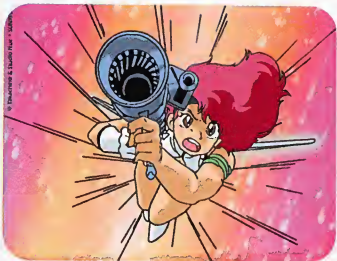
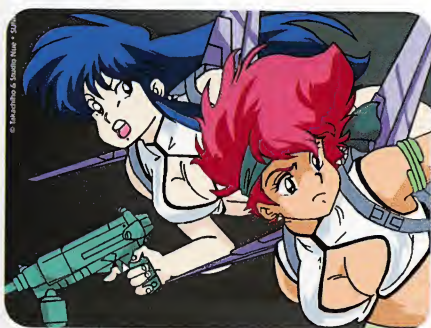
Character Design: It's old-school. People are plump, hair and clothes are totally late '80s, but the main characters still look good.

Soundtrack: Nice balance of typical anime pop and decent early-'90s-style techno.

Fight Scenes: It's all action, from start to finish. The final Android battle is very cool.

Highlight: This is a fine example of anime that bridged the gap from old-school to new.

Final Analysis: Awesome historical value!



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BUBBLEGUM CRISIS

TOKYO 2040

•1999 ADV FILMS (USA)

SPECIAL FIRST LOOK PREVIEW!

SCIENCE FICTION

Yet another epic series coming soon from ADV, *Bubblegum Crisis 2040* spins a futuristic tale you won't be able to take your eyes off of. The story, set in a beautifully realized futuristic Tokyo, revolves around an uber-corporation, Genom, and a faction of female vigilantes with enough, uh, courage, to defy them. Join Knight Sabers Sylia, Linna, Nene, and Priss (remind you of anyone?) and some of the sexiest combat suits you've ever seen as 2040 gets underway this Summer. Having viewed a Japanese screener, I must say that for a TV series, the animation is superb, and the character, mecha, and urban design are spellbinding. Based on the '80s *Bladerunner*-inspired cyberpunk classic, *Bubblegum Crisis*, which was set



in the year 2032, this movie will have fans of the original reveling in the re-tooled visuals, and newcomers will likely search out the original after viewing this modern production. Look to GR for complete coverage in the months ahead!



VOL. 1
 BUBBLEGUM CRISIS
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D. Halverson

1. Bubblegum Crisis 2040 ADV
2. Neon Gen. Evangelion ADV
3. Ninja Cadets! Anime Works
4. Ninja Resurrection ADV
5. Ghost in the Shell Manga

ADV's R. Peters

1. Ninja Resurrection ADV
2. Neon Gen. Evangelion ADV
3. Darkstalkers VIZ
4. Ushio & Tora ADV
5. Ping Pong Club Soft.Sculptors

ADV's B. Atwell

1. Perfect Blue Manga
2. Macross: Do You Remember Love
3. Venus Wars US Manga
4. Porco Rosso
5. Golden Boy ADV



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anime top 5
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READERS' TOP 5

1. Darkstalkers VIZ
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4. Utena Software Sculptors
5. Slayers Explosion Array ADV

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3RD PRIZE
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Hitomi and Friends resolve to leave the Kingdom of Asturia, and head for the Principality of Freid, the next target for the Zaibach forces. This country however conceals sad memories for Allen. It is the homeland of the young prince, who was born of forbidden love to the late Princess Merle. To protect the state of the Duke of Freid, the youths desperately make preparations for war. But alas, it is too late, as Zaibach forces are already closing in. The group courageously enters the fight against the Zaibach. It is during this battle that Van and Escaflowne encounter their greatest crisis.

SKU 0421
ISBN 669198042133
UPC 1-58354-147-0

English Subtitled
SRP \$24.98



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MOBILE SUIT

GUNDAM 0083

STARDUST MEMORY

GUNDAMJACK

Three years of peace have followed the Earth Federation's victory over the Duchy of Zeon. Now, in the year 0083, the last remnants of Zeon begin their plan for revenge by stealing a prototype Gundam armed with nuclear weapons. Can rookie Federation pilot Kou Uraki challenge the legendary ace Anavel Gato, and prevent the cataclysmic rebirth of Zeon?
Episodes 1-2

SKU 0370
ISBN 669198037030
UPC 1-58354-139-x

English Dubbed
SRP \$19.98

INTO BATTLE, ALBION

As Kou deals with his loss of Gundam Unit-02 at the hands of Anavel Gato, the Albion's crew is charged with recovery of the missing Gundam and its nuclear arsenal. With the help of a hidden Zeon base, Gato begins preparations to rendezvous with the main Delaz fleet in space. Can Kou escape a Zeon trap in time to prevent Gato's escape?
Episodes 3-4

SKU 0371
ISBN 669198037139
UPC 1-58354-140-3

English Dubbed
SRP \$19.98

Produced by:

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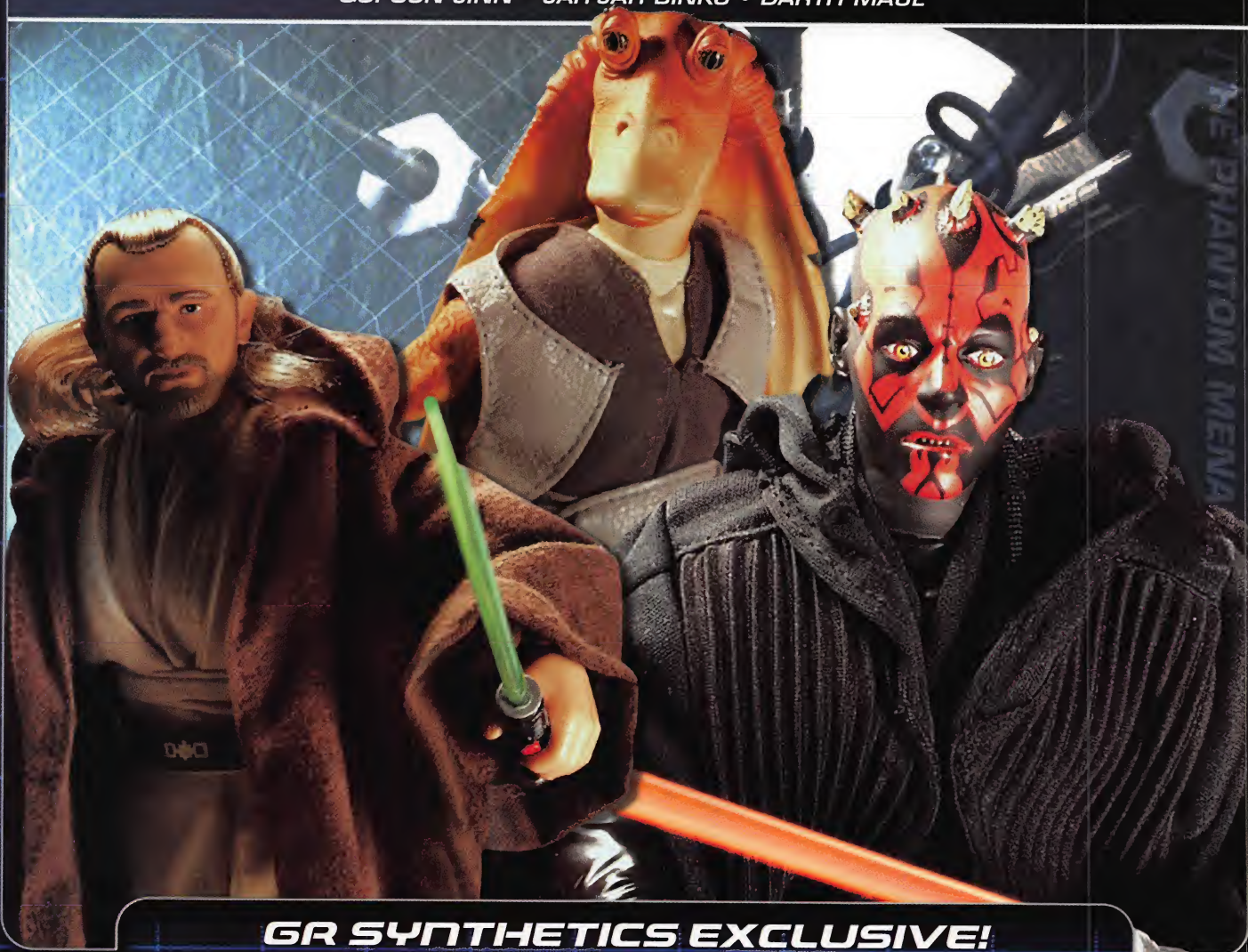
For more information, please see www.pioneeranimation.com or call 1-800-421-1621. Retailers, please call Pioneer Entertainment Sales at 1-871-410-5050 x5084 or call your favorite video distributor.

Having just viewed the insane second trailer for *Episode 1*, I've now decided that I am going to chase after every scrap of associated paraphernalia that comes out, and these 12 inch figures are a good place to start. Featuring meticulous detail right down to the threads, you can bet that these puppies will fly off of store shelves like turkeys on Thanksgiving. They're from Hasbro and should be available when showtime commences this May 9. My suggestion is you go directly from the theater to the retail establishment of your choice. Besides these, Hasbro are readying all manner of plastic fantastic. We'll have more as the information pours in.

[JAR-JAR BINKS]

STAR WARS EPISODE 1

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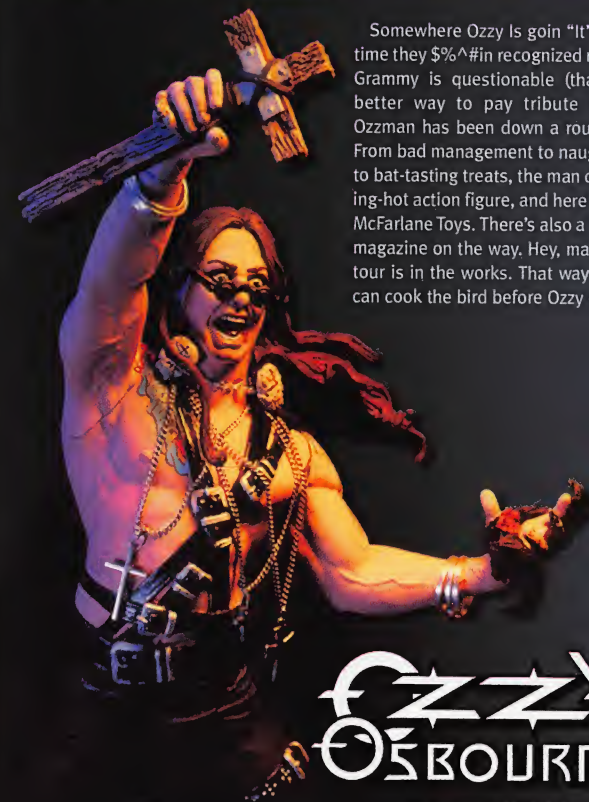
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Does this make you horny, baby? Yeah! Er, well, it shouldn't; it's a piece of plastic. But tell me Todd's not respecting the cheeky '70s icon with stunningly detailed craftsmanship, and I'll show you a dentist who could fix his teeth! McFarlane's work makes everyone look randy and he's the only cat capable of reincarnating the flick's fab cast in shagadelic detail. They've even managed to get a hold of some boss voice chips to make the whole lot sound off with phrases like Dr. Evil's "Why must I be surrounded by frickin' idiots?" Figures on the way are Felicity Shagwell, Fat Bastard, Dr. Evil, Austin Powers, and... Austin Powers: Underwear Edition. Twig 'n' berries included! Oh Behave!

AUSTIN POWERS



Somewhere Ozzy is goin' "It's about \$#%^ in time they \$#%^ in recognized me." And since a Grammy is questionable (thank God), what better way to pay tribute than this? The Ozzman has been down a rough, rough road. From bad management to naughty substances to bat-tasting treats, the man deserves a burning-hot action figure, and here it is, courtesy of McFarlane Toys. There's also a McFarlane Ozzy magazine on the way. Hey, maybe a Kiss/Ozzy tour is in the works. That way Gene Simmons can cook the bird before Ozzy eats it!

OZZY OSBOURNE



Crystal's sleeper hit *Akuji* is proof of two things: voodoo is alive and well, and game characters make kick-ass action figures. Tell me this duo couldn't eat a couple of X-Men for lunch! These superbly sculpted characters feature an unsurpassed level of articulation, detailed paint and, get this, dreadlocks that feel...like friggin' dreadlocks! Look for them at Babbages and finer comic book or toy retailers everywhere.

AKUJI

THE HEARTLESS

Available through comic book stores exclusively, and one of the year's best-looking and -put together figures, Todd McFarlane Productions has captured the mood of Frank Miller's *Sin City* perfectly with this meticulously detailed version of Marv. Holding the head of the character he decapitated in issue one of the comic, Marv comes complete with survival gear fit for a Lakers game, including a hacksaw, pistol, hatchet and switchblade. You can even insert the knife into a bloody wound on his back. He stands 6 1/2 inches tall, has a bitchin' rubber coat, is fully articulated, comes in two colors (morbid grey and fleshy) and comes complete with the stand shown. Buy two, because this one's gonna come out of the package.



TOYCOM INC. PRESENTS

GHOST IN THE SHELL

LIMITED STATUES



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Subject:
Motoko "Major" Kusanagi

Rank:
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Security Police
Section 9

Age:
Unknown

Augmentations:
Unknown.
Presumed
extensive
cybernetic
replacement.

Height:
24cm (9.6in)

Material:
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w/ plastic
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Features:
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Gamers' Re(public) Music Reviews

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

Last month I featured MW's hard-to-find jungle/kitsch epic *Home Movies from the Brainforest* hoping that fans of this music would track down the obscure release. Suddenly Mr. Dorn has another couple of projects on the loose. There's an interesting DVD, called *Detonator and Diagnosis*, and there's his new full-length album (on a new label), entitled *Mixed Emotional Features*. This newest excursion isn't quite on par with *Brainforest's* amazingly diverse quality, but it's good, so much better than so much out there right now. Again what separates Mocean Worker from the crowd is his uncompromising mastery over intense, soulful, and eclectic jungle sounds meeting head-on with jazzy kitsch. For example, "Counts, Dukes & Strays" weaves haunting clarinet/sax melodies over a deep jazz bassline and a classic jazz high-hat/cymbal accompaniment. Suddenly there's more, lifting intricate but barely perceptible sounds through the jazzy layers, raising tempo, breathing life into it. "Rene M" is an ambient and subtle masterpiece of rolling breaks cast between rich synthy string layers, while "Mycroft" is a pounding jungle beast filled with bashing drums and imposing, rippling basslines. Despite this contrast, it's always clear that you're listening to the same artist. That's Mocean Worker's magic: His pieces are varied and of the highest production quality; they're provoking and original, leaving one curious for more. After my first listen through *Mixed Emotional Features*, I instinctively threw a different CD into my player. It didn't last beyond the second track, though. I had to put MW back in because I needed to hear the cool choons all over again.

Mike Griffin

Mocean Worker
Palm Pictures, Domestic

B



Mixing Eastern and Western musical sensibilities isn't exactly new (witness the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood," and more recently, Transglobal Underground) but when it's done with the subtlety, grace, and sense of history that Badawi possesses, the end result is a moving and transcendental experience of the highest order. Badawi, aka Reuel "Raz" Mesinai (half of the band Sub Dub) has been toiling away at the fringe of classical Eastern and modern Western musical styles for years, and it is with *The Heretic of Ether* that he finally makes a headlong plunge into a true convergence of these styles. Making use of piano, violin, zarb (a drum used in Persian music), cello, and keyboard, this former DJ, dub purveyor, and member of New York's underground illbient scene has crafted a record that recalls Peter Gabriel's *Passion* and Kronos Quartet's *Pieces of*



Africa reinterpreted by a minimalist Ravi Shankar. Poignant strings, bass guitar, and deep piano chords of the track "Return of the Heretic" coexist organically and naturally with Eastern percussion, creating a frantic sonic soundscape that is at once familiar and exciting. Badawi is making modern music for a new age, where preconceptions have no place and emotion is king.

Horselover Fat

The Heretic of Ether
Badawi
Asphodel, Domestic

B+

GR: So Tommy, what's the extent of your involvement with the game right now?

Tommy: I'm doing all the sound effects for the game. I'm writing some tunes for the game, separate from the Fear Factory stuff, but Accolade actually hired me to produce Fear Factory. It's kinda cool, because, you know, here's a big, huge band and it's the video game who's producing them! It's a real crossover. It's funny 'cause I'm working with Raymond (Fear Factory's drummer) on another project, *Messiah*, and I'm doing all the sound on that game too. So this is really the second time we've worked together.

GR: Is it all-new material, just for the game?

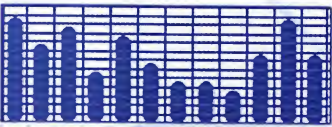
Tommy: Yeah. We're just coming up with stuff on the fly. We haven't really written anything before today. We were sort of exchanging stuff here and there, but what you're seeing today is the bulk of the creative process. We're trying to get all the proper sounds together, you know: how the snare drum sounds, how the kick drum sounds, how thick the guitar sounds, all that stuff. We're recording a five- or six-minute song, laying down three of four of the same sections. Once we've got it down, we'll overdub the guitars and keyboards. I'm doing it this way so, for example, we can have the guitar doing a harmony thing in the first section, and in the same section later on we can throw in some keyboards. This way I can pick and choose what I want later on. And it's all being written specifically for *Demolition Racer*.

GR: Are you going to be doing any "extra-curricular" activities to ensure that *Demolition Racer* has the most realistic sounds possible?

Tommy: Well, I'm actually going to get in the cars, smash up real cars for this project. We're going to go to a real derby and I'm going to climb into a car in the middle of the derby. I want to hear what it sounds like to be in a car, in the mix. If I don't know what it sounds like then I can't reproduce it on the PS.

GR: You like hands-on development, don't you?

Tommy: Yeah! I want the most real sounds possible. I'll give you an example: When I was doing *Faceoff* for Sony, I rented out the Duck Pond in Anaheim, the whole #%*& building! To get that reverb, that organ reverb, most people would just plug in an organ sound through a reverb unit to get it. So I hired the lady that plays the organ at the Duck Pond, and I brought the guy in who does all the commenting over the PA, and I just stood there with a microphone and recorded it all. The really challenging part is putting all of these sounds in the machine.



GR



TOMMY TALLARICO



We recently visited Tommy Tallarico's awesome Malibu recording studio, where he is producing the soundtrack for Accolade's action racing game Demolition Racer for the PS. He's doing all the sound effects in the typically over-the-top Tommy way, and he's producing the hardcore group Fear Factory, who are providing the soundtrack. We spoke to Tommy about his work on the effects, and we sat down with Fear Factory, in the studio, only to discover that they're rabid, informed, super compulsive gamers. Here's part 1 of 2, a candid talk with Tommy Tallarico about his work on Demolition Racer and video game sound hardware in general...

GR: And can you do it?

Tommy: Yes, but you have to know what to do with the sounds once you've got 'em. You can't just hand a DAT tape over to somebody. You can't just say, "Hey, here's a hundred sound effects." We take the sounds down from CD quality, 16-bit, 44Khz, to 16-bit 12Khz. We pan the sound from left to right in the machine. Once it's in the PS we compress the sound from 4 to 1. Unlike most sound guys, we spend a lot of time down sampling to 12Khz. A lot of guys would take a 16-bit 44Khz sample and just down sample it straight to 11Khz. Why do people use 11Khz all the time? They go from 16-bit 44Khz, to 16-bit 22Khz, to 16-bit 11Khz, just because it's half of each one. There's no other rhyme or reason for it. We use 12Khz.

The human ear actually hears things differently between 11 and 12Khz. Everyone always uses 11Khz, well, just because. You really notice the difference on voice samples, especially. Anyway, instead of going straight from 44 to 12Khz, where you're taking chunks of data out at a time, we take it down in steps. 44 to 41, 41 to 39, etc. This way you're not taking complete chunks out; you're spreading it out as it goes lower and lower. We're running a 3D-spectrum analysis on each part as it is lowered, in a waveform. Normally you lose EQ, but each time we lower the sound we re-EQ it. So even when a sample is at a lower frequency, we're still maintaining the same quality.

GR: What do you think of the N64 sound hardware?

Tommy: To be honest, the N64's 4-to-1 compression, we're finding, needs a different treatment. The stuff that we have at 12Khz on the PS, when we put the exact same stuff on the N64, sounds like garbage. We actually have to up the sample rate from 12 to 16Khz 'cause the compression just doesn't sound as good. You're also sacrificing clock speed. For every voice that we could use easily on the PS, we have to use 1 percent of the main CPU. The N64 apparently has 32 channels of audio at once for, you know, Midi, music, and sound effects. Yeah, do you know any programmer who's going to give up 1/3 of the main CPU processor? No way. They'll give you 10 or 12 percent at the most. So I'm not even doing any real Midi-based



music stuff on N64. With the projects I am working on for N64, again I'm using this trick that I do: I'll do the music live, I'll do the real music, then I'll down-sample it and compress it and keep it in the sound RAM. I'm working on *Knockout Kings*, and we're doing all the menus this way. I'm trying to stick to the sports games on N64 that don't require tons and tons of music, 'cause it is a huge hassle to get it to sound right. As a creative guy, you want to be able to write a tune the way the want to create it, and then move on...instead of spending the next two

weeks trying to get it to sound good.

GR: What do you think of the DC sound hardware?

Tommy: Well, the PSX2 sound hardware is better, but Sega addressed a lot of problems that the Saturn was plagued with. The cool thing about the Dreamcast is that they actually have MP3 drivers, so you can have a big, long song, and not necessarily need the GD to stream it in. Right now the quality wouldn't be as good as if it was playing off the GD, but it's pretty damn close.

GR: What do you think of the PSX2 sound hardware...how will it make your job easier?

Tommy: Lots. We're going to have to compress less and you're going to hear a considerable sound difference. All the sound effects and ambient sounds will be almost perfect all the time, at 44Khz. It depends on the game of course. In a racing type game, you could even go to 48Khz on the PSX2, so even higher than CD quality. If we were doing *Test Drive 6*, or *Demolition Racer*, because there's not tons and tons of sound effects, we could be running all these sounds at 44Khz Stereo...the crowds and everything. That's what's so great about the PSX2: they have a dedicated sound chip that does nothing else but sound. The programmers won't steal it!

Thanks to Tommy for the interesting chat! With so many projects on the go, we'll definitely be featuring him in these pages again in the future. Be sure to check in next month for our in-depth Fear Factory interview...these guys (especially their cool drummer, Raymond) are truly hardcore gamers...



Sega Rally 2



Above, we have the same scene at 30 fps (left) and 60 fps (right).



IN HONOR OF OUR NEW RETRO SECTION, WE PRESENT A RETRO CODE.

Diagonal view

Press L + R + Select during game play

Alternate view

Press Start to pause game play and press Select. Then, press L, R, L, R, L, R, L, R and resume your game. An unplayable view is now yours!

Radio control

Complete all four Stunt Trax courses, then press Up at the course selection screen.

Control intermission sequence

Pause the game. Control the animated car by pressing L and R (brake), Y (accelerate), and Select (reverse).

White Land track warp

Select the Free Trax mode, the 2WD car, and the White Land track. Jump near the Stunt Race FX sign at the beginning of the race to go to the upper part of the track.

CPU control

Select the two-player Battle Trax mode and choose cars for both players. Start a race and leave the controls alone. The CPU will take over each car after a few seconds.

A WEALTH OF NEW CODES HAVE APPEARED FOR SEGA'S AWESOME RALLY 2, AND HERE THEY ARE. YOU'LL NOTICE THE PROPER CODE FOR GETTING THE 60 FPS MODE WORKING, ALONG WITH A 30 FPS MODE.

ALL CARS

Press UP, Down, Up, B, A, Left, Bx2, Down at title screen.

ALL SEASONS

Press UP, Left, Down, Right, B, A, B, Right, Down at title screen. All tracks should be unlocked.

60 FRAMES MODE

Press UP, A, Downx2, Left, Right, Bx2, Down at the main menu.

30 FRAMES MODE

Press Up, A, Down x2, Left, Right, B x2, Up at the main menu.

CONTROL CAMERA

Press A, Y, or X to change the view when in replay mode. Press B to return to the normal view.



Stunt Race FX



Silent Hill

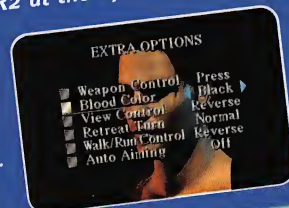
CHEAT MODE

Press Ctrl+X during game play to display the cheat prompt. Enter one of the following case-sensitive codes to activate the corresponding cheat function. Now this tough game becomes a bit more manageable, hey?

Invincibility Cavalry
 All weapons Hemmit
 Full shields Medic

EXTRA OPTIONS

Press L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 at the options screen. An "Extra Options" menu with weapon control, blood color, view control, retreat, turn, walk/run control, and auto aiming selections will appear.



Recoil

CHEAT MODE

Enter one of the following codes at the main menu to activate the corresponding cheat function.

Toggle debug menu iamalazybastard
 High gravity jackimflying
 Medium gravity flymetothemoon
 Restore normal gravity bringmebackdowntoearth
 Mirror mode reflections
 Expert difficulty trotters
 Hard difficulty bigandpink



HERE'S HOW TO OPEN UP ALL THE PAGES IN THE POWER STONE COLLECTION BOOK.

Pgs 1-4
 Extra items for use in-game are opened up the first four times you beat the game on any difficulty and with any character.

Pg 5
 Virtual Battle is opened once you beat the game with Kraken.

Pg 6
 This two-player split-screen mode is opened when you beat the game with Valgas.

Pg 7-9
 The three VMS mini-games are opened once you complete the game five, six, and seven times with different characters.

Pg 10
 Beat the game with all eight normal characters to play as the pirate boss Kraken

Pg 11
 Beat the game with Kraken to play as Valgas.

Pg 12
 To access the gelatinous Final Valgas, beat the game with Valgas without continuing.

Pg 13
 Earn over 1000 coins in the VMS games to look at cool Power Stone art.

Pg 14
 Character endings

Pg 15
 Earn 2000 coins in the VMS games to unlock a sound test.



Rollcage



Power Stone



THE CORRUPTOR

NEW LINE CINEMA

RATED R
In theaters Now

This ain't no *Lethal Weapon*, but it is a "buddy cop" movie, hard-core Hong Kong style, where the good guys are sometimes bad, the bad guys are sometimes good, and the guns are always blazing. Chow Yun-Fat (*The Replacement Killers*) electrifies the big screen as NYPD Detective Nick Chen, the head of the Asian Crimes Unit in New York's Chinatown. Academy Award nominee Mark Wahlberg (*Boogie Nights*, *The Big Hit*) co-stars as Danny Wallace, the rookie assigned to the all-Asian unit as a token white cop in a time of great political pressure. Director James Foley then leads us through a two-hour web of intrigue and deception, where nearly every character is not who or what



they seem to be, and as we learn more of Chen's history with the established Chinese "business" group, the Tongs, and their escalating war with the new gang in town, the Fukienese Dragons, Danny starts to learn that not everything is black and white.

Rounding out the cast are Ric Young as Henry Lee, the number two man in the Tong

organization and, as we learn, one of the chief "corruptors"; Paul Ben-Victor as Agent Schabacker, an FBI agent looking to bust all the bad guys, including bad cops; Brian Cox as Sean Wallace, Danny's ex-cop father with a chronic drinking problem and a deadly gambling problem; and newcomer Jon Kit Lee as Jack, a Fukienese underling caught between his associates and Chen's influences.

Producer Dan Halsted came up with the concept of *The Corruptor* after reading a New York Times article about two NYPD cops stationed in Chinatown who were indicted for corruption, and saw it as a great vehicle to further propel Yun-Fat's career in the U.S., who has been well-known in Asia as one of John Woo's top leading men.

This movie is not for the squeamish or easily offended; it contains a fair amount of graphic violence, blood, and nudity, but everything is there to move the storyline and draw you further in. If you're looking for a really great cop film that's not like all the rest, you've got to see *The Corruptor*.



WING COMMANDER

20TH CENTURY FOX

This movie snuck in under the radar and hit theaters almost without warning...in fact, some pundits question whether anyone will go to see it or just the new *Star Wars* trailer. You can guess the story from the outset: earth is in dire peril from alien invasion, one small group of renegades are the only ones close enough to stop them, and, love interests throw a monkey-wrench into the works. Of course, the special effects are top-notch, and the story, based on Chris Roberts' hit series of PC games, is believable. While the movie has some light-hearted moments, some of the funniest are supposed to be serious moments, but the lines are delivered in such a way that the while audience is guaranteed to crack up every time. Still, *Wing Commander* is as good (though sometimes as schlocky) as any of the *Star Trek* movies, just without 20 years of character recognition.



Rated PG-13 - In theaters Now

IN MEMORY: Gene Siskel

JAN 26, 1946-FEB 20, 1999

For the past 23 years, Gene Siskel has been sitting in a balcony alongside Roger Ebert every week, doling out his critiques of films to the American public. Last May, he underwent surgery to remove a growth on his brain, but in February he lost a quiet and unpublicized battle at age 53. His list of honors and accomplishments are numerous: five emmy nominations, an Iris award from the National Association of Television Programming Executives, and, with Ebert, honored as Men of the Year in 1993 by the Hollywood Radio and Television Society. Since 1974, he has made the role of the televised film critic as American as baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie, and through his written reviews (now available on the web as well as in newspapers) provided a means for people to better select what they should spend their entertainment dollars on. Enjoy your seat in the big balcony in the sky, and we'll see you at intermission.

VISIT A COMPLETE LISTING OF SISKEL & EBERT'S TOP TENS AT <http://www.refstar.com/s&e>



THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

Are you enjoying *Wing Commander*? Then hold onto your daggett, because *No Prisoners*, the visual effects company for the *Wing Commander* film, have slated production time to work on a *Battlestar Galactica* feature film, which begins production in Luxembourg in late summer. • On the lighter side, Tim Allen will star in Dreamwork's *Galaxy Quest*, the comical story of a washed-up star from a sci-fi TV show (read: *Star Trek*) who is whisked away by aliens to save their world. But will he need a tool belt? • For you all-digital freaks, Pixar has announced that *A Bug's Life* will be the first all-digital release to DVD. Rather than transfer the final tape to DVD, as in usual productions, they will send the digitally rendered images direct to disk. Prepare for this landmark on April 20, when they will release both DVD and Home Video versions. • America Online continues their conquest of the non-Microsoft world as they acquire Moviefone, the movie listing and ticketing service we've all grown to love. AOL is handing over \$388 million of stock for the acquisition, and will (in theory) allow AOL members to purchase movie tickets online. Or you could just drive to the theater...nah, what was I thinking? • Wake up! *Star Wars: Episode One* opens nationwide on May 21. Or May 19. Well, check your local paper in the middle of May. Of course, the lines are forming now... • John Singleton is remaking *Shaft*, and he wants Samuel L. Jackson in the title role. Could anything be cooler? • Not cooler than *Shaft*, but still warm: the current lineup for the upcoming Universal feature film *Rocky and Bullwinkle* includes Jason Alexander as Boris, Rene Russo as Natasha, and Robert DeNiro as Fearley's Leader, as well as Randy Quaid as FBI Director Cappy von Trappment. The title characters are slated to be animated against the live-action talent listed above...but who will voice moose and squirrel? Stay tuned... • Remember *Parasite Eve*, the Japanese Playstation RPG that GR characterized as "visually arresting and eerily captivating...the first truly cinematic RPG"? In Japan, Hideaki Sea's novel has already been made into a hit film in addition to a video game, and now Madonna has acquired the U.S. film rights. In fact, rumor has it that the Material Girl may star in the title role. • Threshold Entertainment and Behaviour Worldwide are teaming up to finance and distribute eight films, including titles based on video games such as *Duke Nukem* and *Zork*, as well as a new *Conan* film. Still no Mario movie, though...

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THE GAMER'S GUIDE TO FILM



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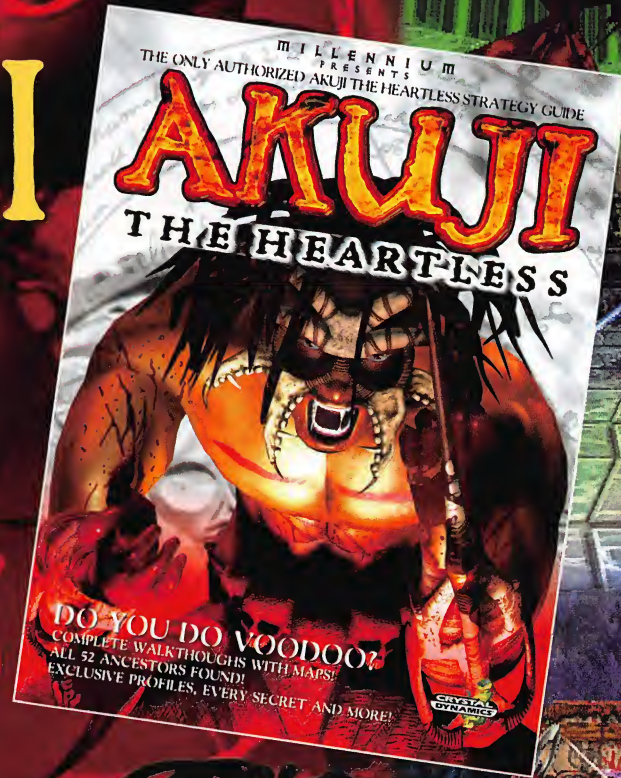
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GEX: DEEP COVER GECHO

continued from page 65

My favorite level, though, (surprise!) is The Anime Channel. A respectable parody, beastly mechs and Sailor Moon chicks abound. It's a gorgeous environment and as far as Gex' suits go, this one takes the cake. All new for '99, the leezard himself has more fun than ever — Gex rides, drives, glides, and swims, piloting everything from a Tank to a one-hump camel. His costumes also factor into the gameplay, as each enables a level specific maneuver like the flying Count Gexula, or Hercules Gex.

The audio has taken on a more whimsical feel overall this time out (except for the strangely foreboding melody that looms as you explore the huge map), and seeing as how Gex 3 is more cartoon-esque than ever before, I think it fits nicely. Although I can't imagine anyone seeking out a Gex 3 soundtrack, each level mantra bops along nicely, especially The Anime Channels. More new stuff includes playable hidden characters, more bonus areas, and a couple of surprises you'll want to savor first hand. While G3's designers obviously borrowed some magic from Banjo, they've added enough of their own to make G3 a sequel that fans of the original and newcomers alike will applaud zealously. ⚡

SHADOW MADNESS

continued from page 71

I almost wished Shadow Madness were a book so that I could read on and inject my own imaginary visuals. The battles themselves emerge slowly and are horribly choreographed; a blazing kick renders no sound effect, FMV summon spells feature blocky polygonal deities, and poisoned characters look like screen trash. There's no sense of connectivity or solidity in them and when victorious, the camera doesn't dare swing in tight (as it did in FF7, providing that pleasing eyeful of Tifa), as these models are as blocky as they come. It's a shame, really, because the daunting soundtrack and excellent story provide a fully immersive experience otherwise. The rendered visuals are very good for the most part, and the interface and control are well thought out. But the overwhelming contrast between the pre-rendered and the polygonal is overwhelming. The right thing to do would be to re-do the polygonal elements and repair the battle engine, seeing as how so much work has gone in otherwise. Sadly, though, this rarely ever happens. So if it is the story element that you find key in your quest for that next RPG, by all means look no further, but if you desire graphic prowess to match, well, have a look elsewhere. ⚡

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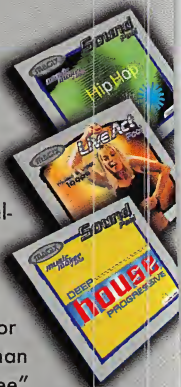
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fig. 1



fig. 2



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Curve

fig. 3



Griffey

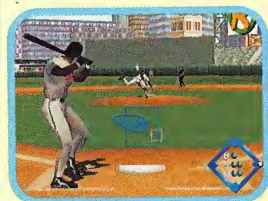


fig. a) WHAM!



fig. b) CRACK!

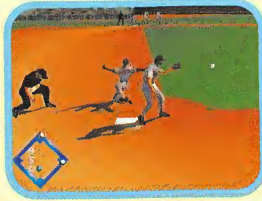


fig. c) SLIDE!



fig. d) SLAM!



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